

COMIC BOOK  
ART TIPS & TECHNIQUES

You begin with an idea and a . . .

# SKETCH

vol. 1 no. 3

\$5.95 u.s.

\$8.40 can.

**Digital  
Coloring**

**Seeing  
The Scene**

**Page  
Composition**

**Thoughts on  
Scripting**

**Behind The  
Panel**

**Marc Silvestri**  
**The Magic Behind**

**TOP COW**





BEAU SMITH - BRAD GORBY

# PARTS UNKNOWN

Alien Scum...

Lookin' For Love In  
All The Wrong Places.

Kill Em' All  
Before They Multiply!



cover by  
Nat Jones  
and  
Slick

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SLICK





When did you start?

When was your first time?

Do you remember what it was like the first time you did it? The hour? The place? What you heard, what you smelled, how you felt? Were you even aware of your surroundings, or, like many of us, totally and wholly caught up in the unfathomable magic and significance of the act?

That first special time you sat down, pencil in hand, with your great friends imagination and enthusiasm for company.

And a comic book.

And you diligently scratched out your first superhero, or scrawled down some words to then etch your first word balloon around the cluster. Maybe you roughed out your first sound effect, enjoying the look and shape of the marks you made without wondering why. Somehow, that comic book called out to you - and somewhere, on some wonderful, exotic level of your mind, you heard it. And followed. Hopefully, everyone remembers their first attempt at creating their very own comic book; it's a very special Occasion in the life of a comic book devotee. Many of us still have that first, seminal scrap of home made comicology tucked away somewhere in our personal archives. Creative people are special people. And comic book people are *very* creative.

*SKETCH* is here for you special, gifted people, building and strengthening your community around our great common interest - the medium of comic books. At *SKETCH* we see a lot of this creativity. We enjoy being a part of your artistic development, and bring a terrific assembly of talented individuals to you for your pleasure every issue. Benefit from the years of research and knowledge our professional contributors have acquired over their well-established careers. Sharpen your business skills with advice from some of their "in the trenches" tales. Enjoy stimulating your creative thought as, in upcoming issues, *SKETCH* starts to go deeper beneath the tips and techniques for more creator thoughts and their very personal philosophies on the field and their art.

Like any artistic endeavor, *SKETCH* will continue to grow, develop, and improve. As the field revitalizes and adapts, *SKETCH* will provide an enjoyable, dynamic, and positive forum for creative information.

At *SKETCH* we *love* comics and the process of creating them. We want to nurture your passion that began with that first pencil stroke and four - colored siren call.

Over the years we've seen a number of changes in comics, good and bad.

Our tools change.

Our techniques change.

Tastes and trends change.

Our artistic mind grows and evolves with its special, genuine enjoyment - and lust - for creating.

For all of us with a ready pencil and another image set to careen from our minds, another story to tell -

**SKETCH ON!!**

Flint Henry  
senior editor

# Sketch

## feature

marc silvestri



pg.4

## words

beau smith - this is the last stand

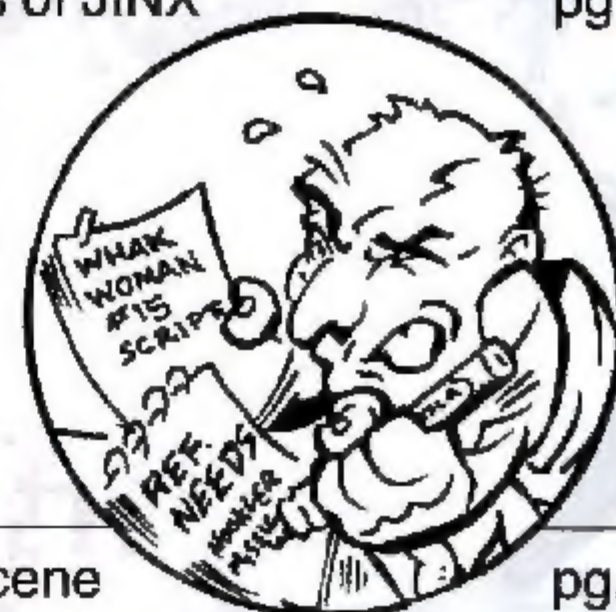
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INTERVIEW

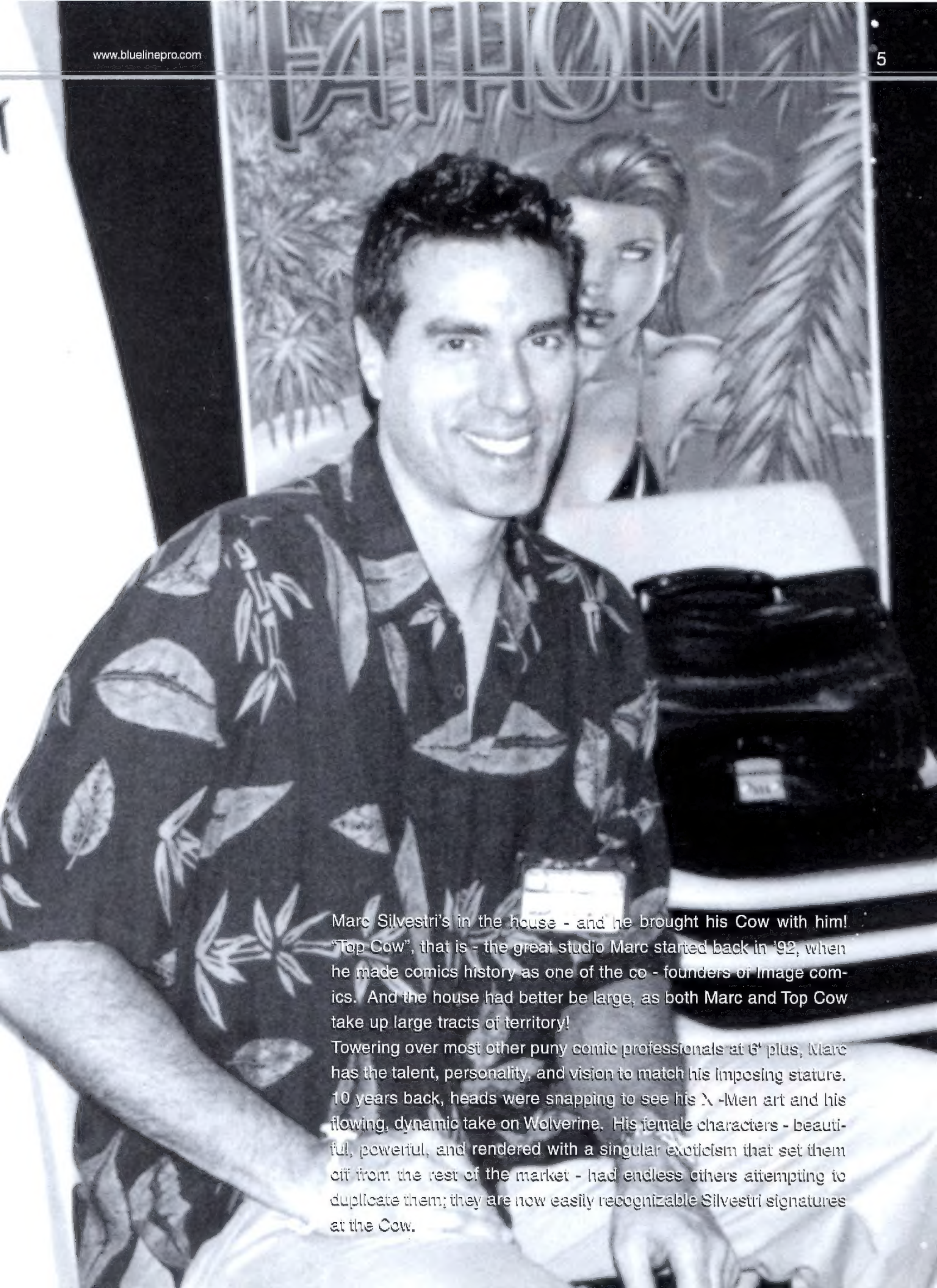
SHE HAS BEEN CHOSEN.



# WITCHBLADE





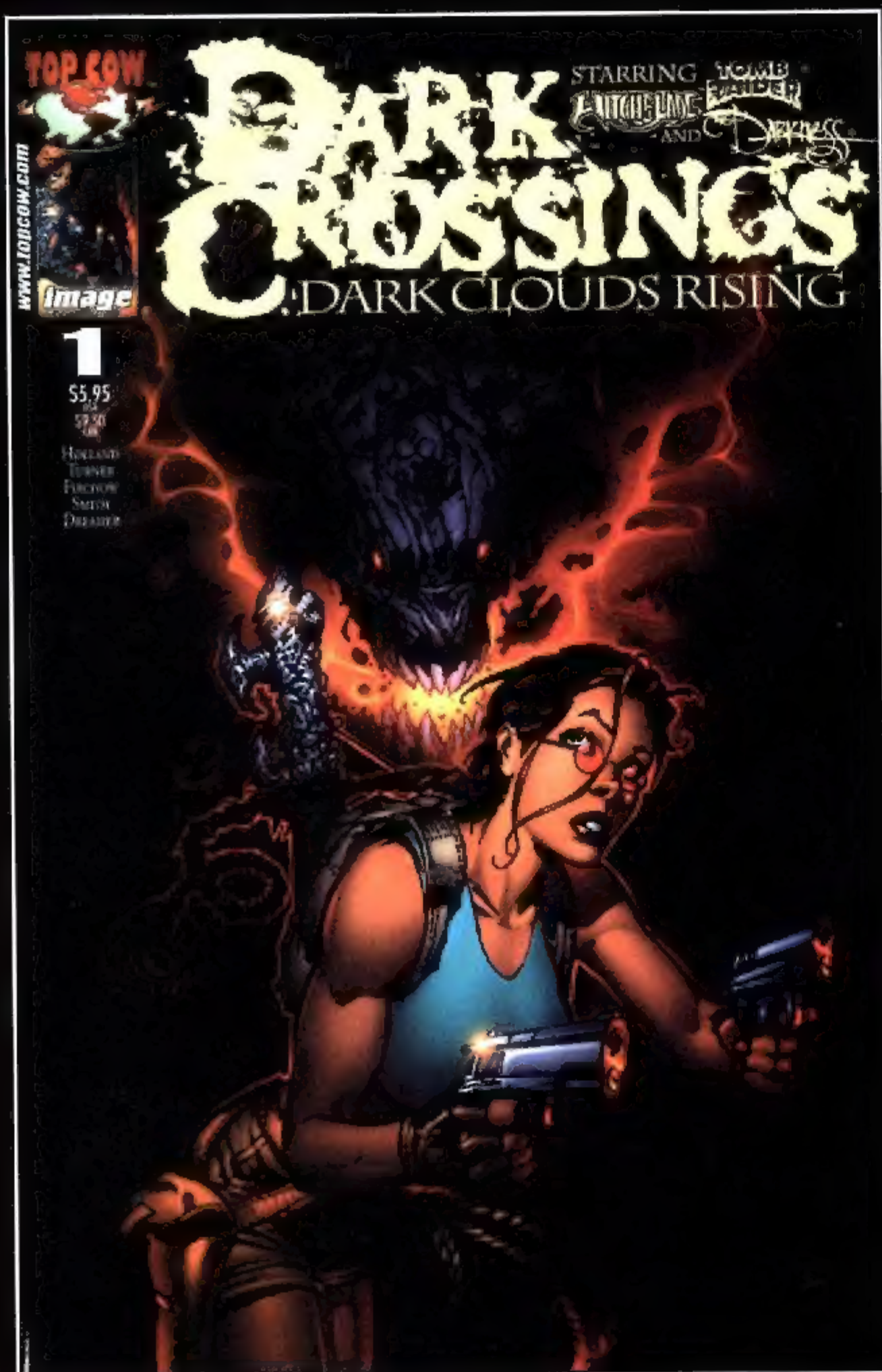


Marc Silvestri's in the house - and he brought his Cow with him! "Top Cow", that is - the great studio Marc started back in '92, when he made comics history as one of the co-founders of Image comics. And the house had better be large, as both Marc and Top Cow take up large tracts of territory!

Towering over most other puny comic professionals at 6' plus, Marc has the talent, personality, and vision to match his imposing stature. 10 years back, heads were snapping to see his X-Men art and his flowing, dynamic take on Wolverine. His female characters - beautiful, powerful, and rendered with a singular exoticism that set them off from the rest of the market - had endless others attempting to duplicate them; they are now easily recognizable Silvestri signatures at the Cow.



# INTERVIEW



With his love of creating and eye for business he is much liked and respected, a big man with a big following. As he leads his Cow into great new pastures, he is a continually busy and in - demand Player in a variety of entertainment fields. Sketch would like to thank him for his valuable time on the following interview.

## Sketch...

*What do you look for when you're hiring a new artist? Writer? Etc.*

## Marc...

We look for someone with the potential and desire to stay with Top Cow for the long term in order to better develop their skills and become a top rate creator. Most of our artists and writers have been with Top Cow for years now, some since Top Cow was formed. That has helped create a solid work environment plus aid in assisting the newer artists improve their skills.

## Sketch...

*Do you enjoy working with young creators?*

## Marc...

Most definitely. I'm always available for when any of our artists, new or old, have questions or need some assistance. It's always great being able to help out and watch them develop into great artists. These guys are the

Currently, Marc's approach to the comics market is a refreshingly singular combination of his personal artistic and business visions. His love for the field is obvious; he continually fosters brand new talent, as well as creating the occasional and much anticipated cover or special project. Away from the drawing board, he's busy making Top Cow into a self - contained production company, adapting and developing Cow's exciting properties into various accessible, entertaining, and cohesive multimedia formats.





artists of our future so I want to make sure I'm there for them.

### **Sketch...**

*When developing a new project, what does Top Cow take in consideration before going ahead with a project (marketability, readers, financial return, etc.)?*

### **Marc...**

We take many things into consideration but always try to stay on the cutting edge with anything we develop. If there's a new, fresh idea that someone here or outside of our company approaches me with, I look at it with an open mind to determine if it's something we would like to produce. We listen to the fans and readers to help determine that and also look to make sure we could deliver 110% in the creation process for it to be successful.

### **Sketch...**

*Is Top Cow doing something to help expand the readership of comic books outside of the direct market?*

### **Marc...**

We've made many steps in broadening our readership within the past year or two. J. Michael Straczynski and Charles Holland, two top television writers with great crossover appeal, are now part of the Top Cow stable. We



were also one of the first comic companies to establish a relationship with Tower Records and have them stock several of our titles in their stores worldwide. The Witchblade television series is also premiering soon (August 27<sup>th</sup>), which should also help create more interest in that title and comic books in general.

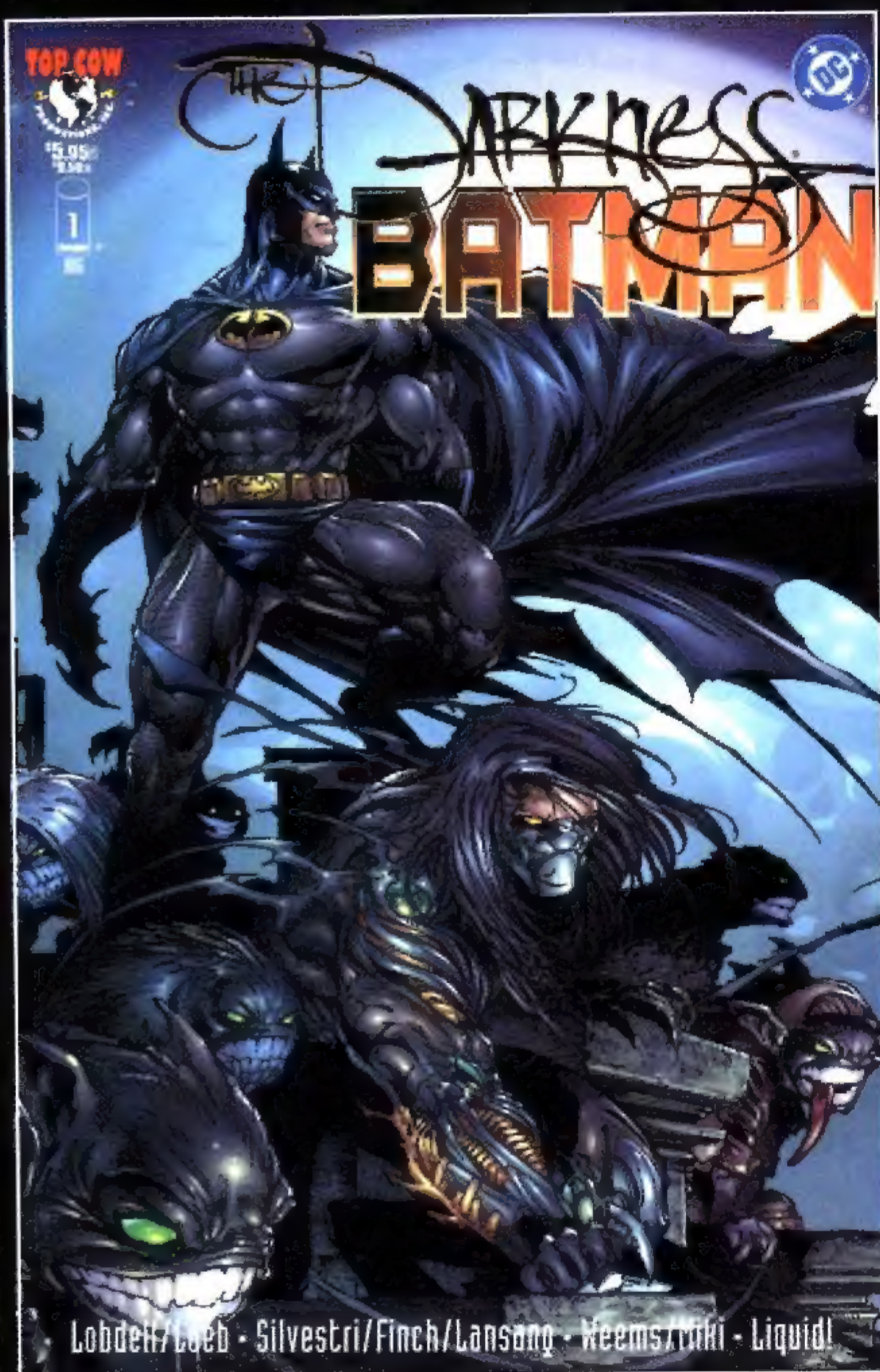
### **Sketch...**

*What tip would you give someone that wants to work in the comic book industry?*





# INTERVIEW



## Marc...

Stay focused and work all the time! Consistency is a major key in being a successful comic creator in the market today. Make sure to take in all the advice you can. Listen to what others in the industry have to say and keep working from there.

## Sketch...

*Will we see a new comic book project from you soon? If so, will*

*it be based on any older characters from Top Cow's past.*

## Marc...

Yes and yes! I've actually just completed a new Cyberforce story in the first Cow issue, which just shipped last week. I've been wanting to draw Cyberforce again and this was a great way to bring them back. I probably wouldn't return to a full series again but you can expect to see my name around for quite a while to come.

## Sketch...

*Do you see a day that comic books can be sold and traded electronically over the Internet? Do you see a problem with piracy?*

## Marc...

That could certainly happen any day now but I still think people will want to have the actual book to hold and read. There's still a certain feeling you get when you read a comic at the pace you desire, finish reading it, then pick it up and reread it all over again. I don't think the piracy issue would be anything to contend with for a long while.



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Photos by Chris Riley.



# SEE WHAT YOU'VE MISSED



B&amp;R FPT #1

## BLOOD AND ROSES Future Past Tense

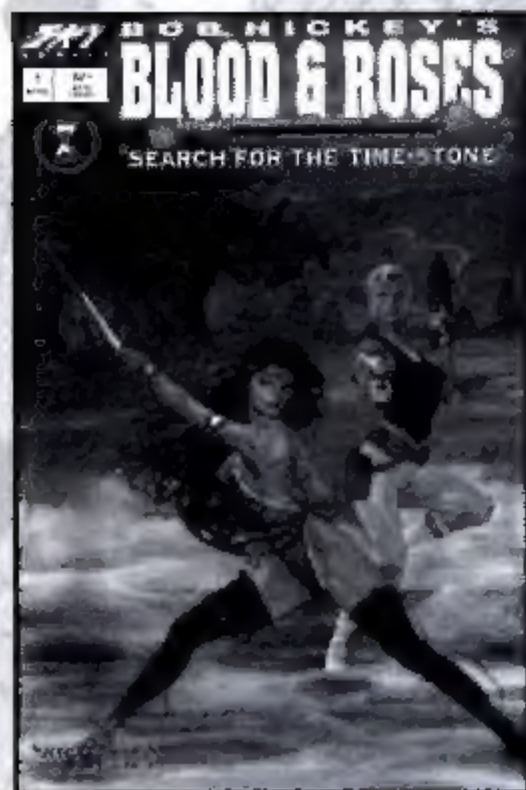
By Bob Hickey, Brad Gorby 32 pgs. color

Blood and Roses set the story for the entire Sky Universe. Thousand-year-old flaming skeletons, alien hunters, and dinosaurs are just a few of the problems that Christiana Blood and Tamara Rose have to deal with in this series.

B&R FPT#1 .....	\$3
B&R FPT#1 signed .....	\$6
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B&amp;R FPT #2



B&amp;R SFTS #1

## BLOOD AND ROSES Search for the Time Stone Hickey, Smith, Martin, Gonzales

Chris and Tam are thrown into the 70's disco era to fight of some live Turkeys. Then travel to England 523 A.D. to visit Camelot and retrieve the last time shard that will return time back to normal...or will it...and why do they keep popping up in the men's bathroom.

32pgs. color and B&W

B&R Search For Time Stone#1 .....	\$3
B&R SFTS #1 signed .....	\$6
B&R SFTS #2 .....	\$3
B&R SFTS #2 signed .....	\$6



B&amp;R SFTS #2

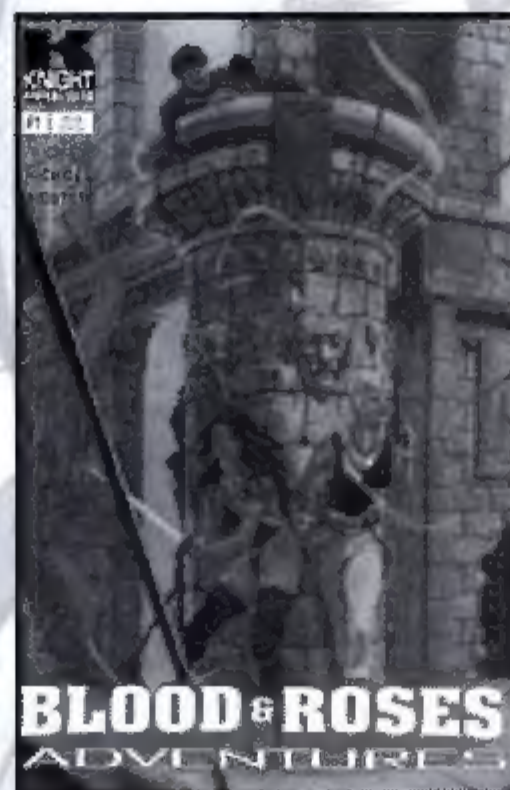


## BLOOD AND ROSES Adventures Hickey, Hester, Nichols, Corroney

This picks up where the mini-series left off. The time stone is complete once more until Marta tries to use its' power for her evil plans. The stone is once again destroyed and Blood and Roas begin the quest to collect all of the shards to put it back together.

24pgs. B&W

B&R #1 .....	\$3
B&R #1 signed .....	\$6
B&R #2 .....	\$3
B&R #2 signed .....	\$6
B&R #3 .....	\$3
B&R #3 signed .....	\$6



B&amp;R ADV. #1



B&amp;R ADV. #2



B&amp;R ADV. #3

## BLOOD AND ROSES Special Hickey, Nichols, Hester, Corroney

This was the last issue of B&R. Infinity gets destroyed and B&R go to Rome.

32 pgs. B&W

B&R Special .....	\$3
Signed .....	\$6

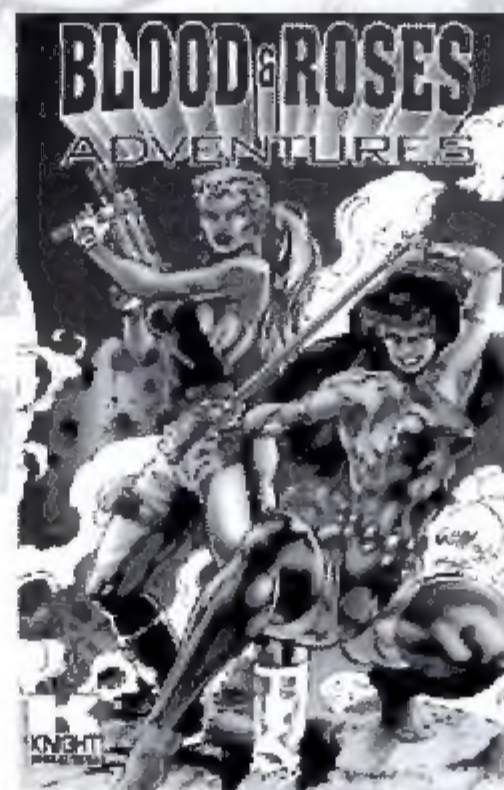


B&amp;R SPECIAL #1

## BLOOD AND ROSES Trade Paperback

Collects all four issues of the premiere Mini-Series, over 50 pages of pin-ups, card art and other misc.. Offering a new wrap around cover by Brad Gorby and Bob Hickey. 109 pages, B&W with a full-color cover.

B&R TPB .....	\$13
Signed .....	\$16



B&amp;R TPB #1

## SACRED STUDIOS

All autographed books are signed by Blood & Roses creator Bob Hickey. Very limited supplies are available! Each order receives a special gift!!

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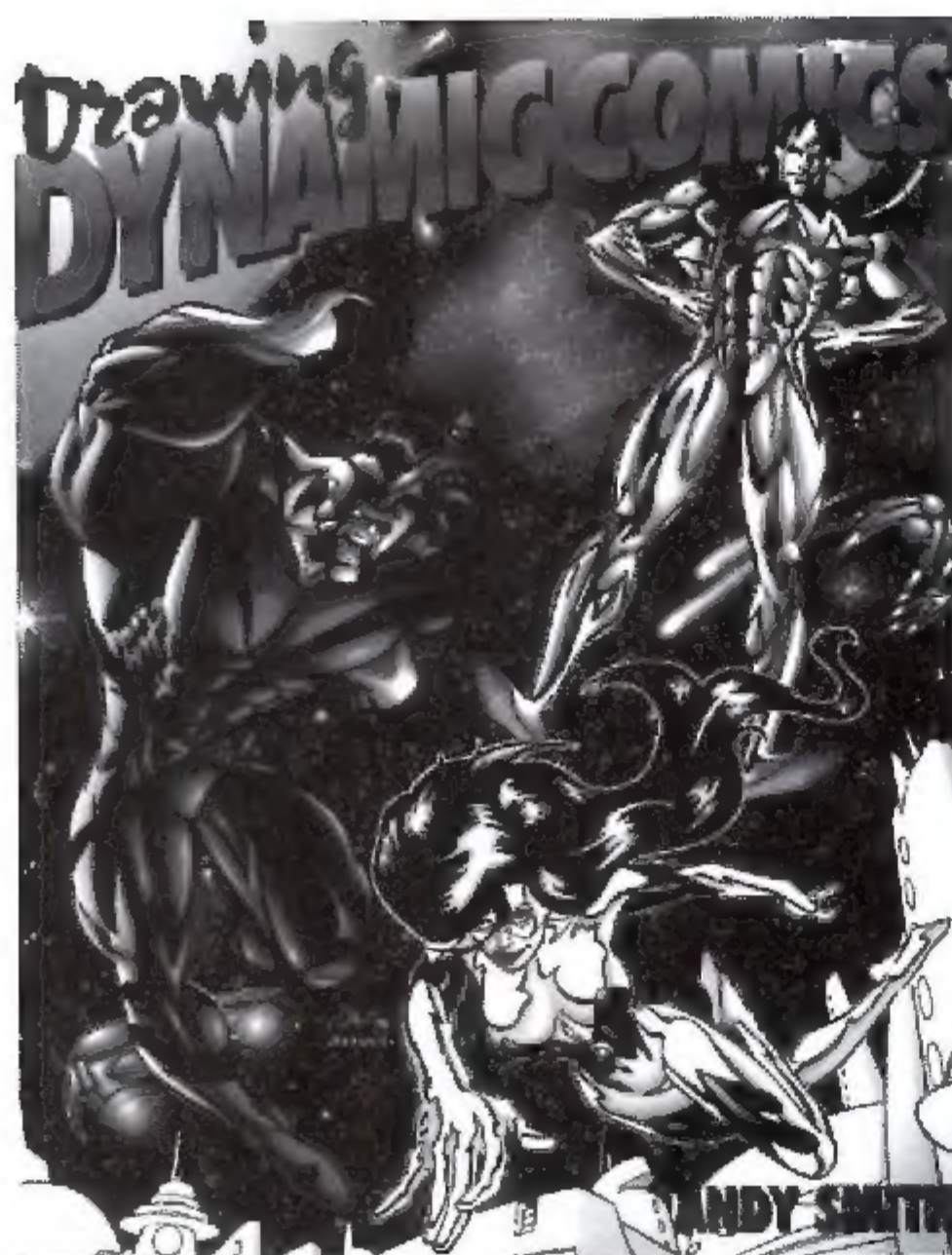
e-mail: store@sacredstudios.com

[www.sacredstudios.com](http://www.sacredstudios.com)

# ...BEFORE THE NEW SERIES BEGINS.



## BOOKS

**DRAWING DYNAMIC COMICS**

By Andy Smith

144 pages. 50 color and 300 black and white illustrations.

Published by Watson-Guptill Publications

ISBN 0-8230-0312-4

This book offers a fresh look at how to illustrate comic books. Andy Smith has illustrated and inked thousands of pages over the years, his most recent work can be seen on DC's Green Lantern and the upcoming CrossGen series The First. In this book he has opened his studio's doors and invited us in for a tour - and what a tour!

This book is a gem.

*Drawing Dynamic Comics* offers a lot more than just a few pretty pictures. At the beginning Andy hits us with "Form, Rendering and Perspective", showing us how it all works in three dimensions. Then he shares his easy step-by-step instructions for drawing figures with correct proportions and anatomy, as well as techniques for drawing heads and faces.

He's a master at those muscle bound heroes. Andy then passes along tips on drawing clothing and costumes, how to use reference materials, and an in-depth look at figures in motion and foreshortening.

The book is just jam - packed with great art, as Andy then gets some of the top names in the industry to illustrate his creation First Man to demonstrate stylistic differences.

Then he cuts loose some of the top inkers in the comic book industry, inking the same piece of artwork to show how they interpreted the various pencilers'

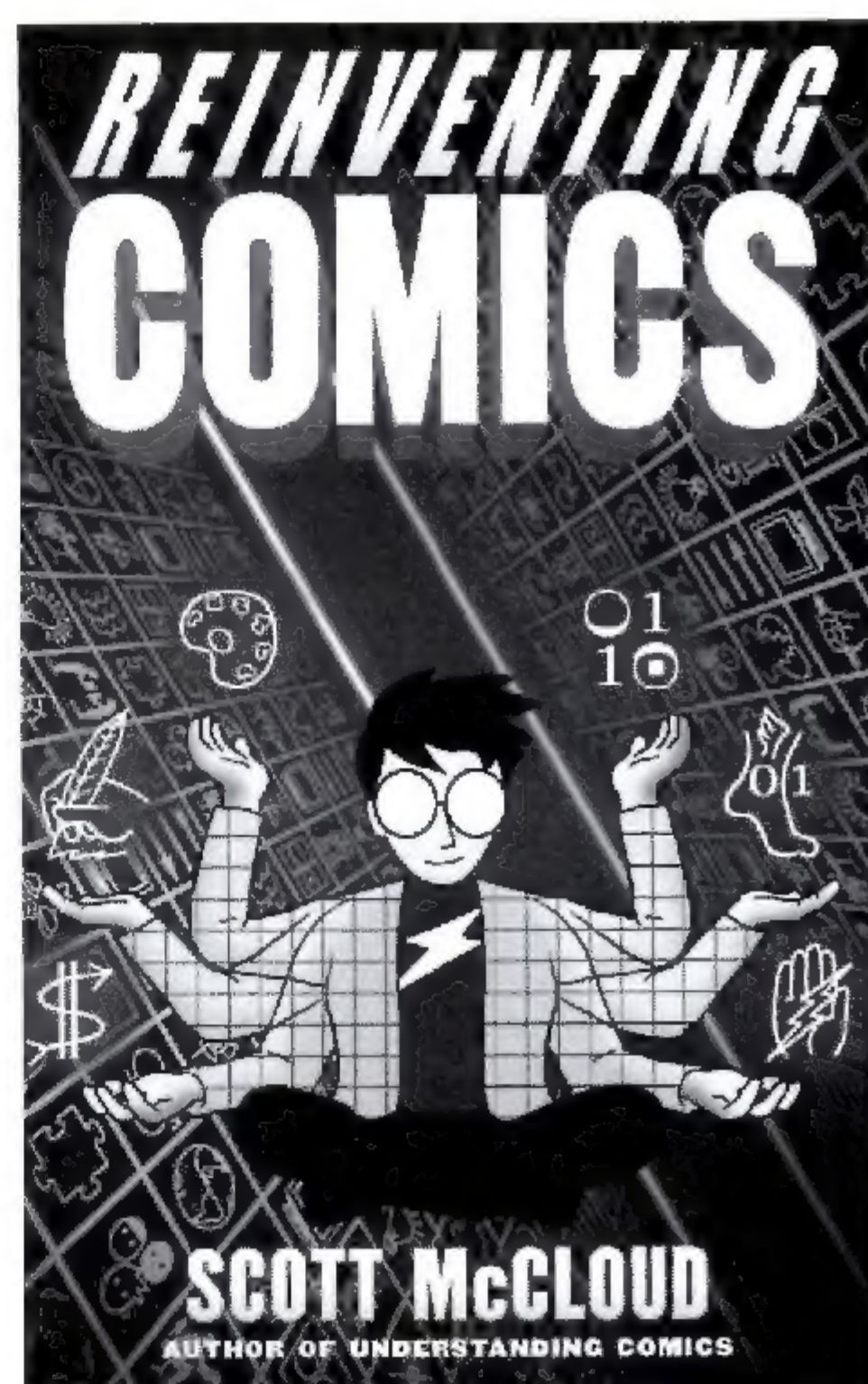
lines. This is one of my favorite articles.

*Drawing Dynamic Comics* is recommended to anyone wanting to learn more about the creative process of comic books. Andy has packed so much information in this one great book you just keep coming back again and again to look, learn and enjoy.

Rated \*\*\*\*

Passing Comments: This is the first time I've seen an illustrator break down the illustrated workings of how to illustrate the human lips.

It works great. This book comes with much praise from inside the industry itself. Andy has nailed it, we can only hope that he has saved a little for a follow up book.

**REINVENTING COMICS**

By Scott McCloud

252 pages color and black and white.

Published by Paradox Press an imprint of DC Comics

Don't confuse *REINVENTING COMICS* with Scott's *UNDERSTANDING COMICS*. Both books are completely different chapters in the development of the comic book industry. Here Scott shares his boundless knowledge on the industry of comic books, then his beliefs on the direction the industry is heading. In *REINVENTING COMICS*, Scott discusses the possible moves from the printed page to the internet or beyond.

*REINVENTING COMICS* is a great read for any cre-



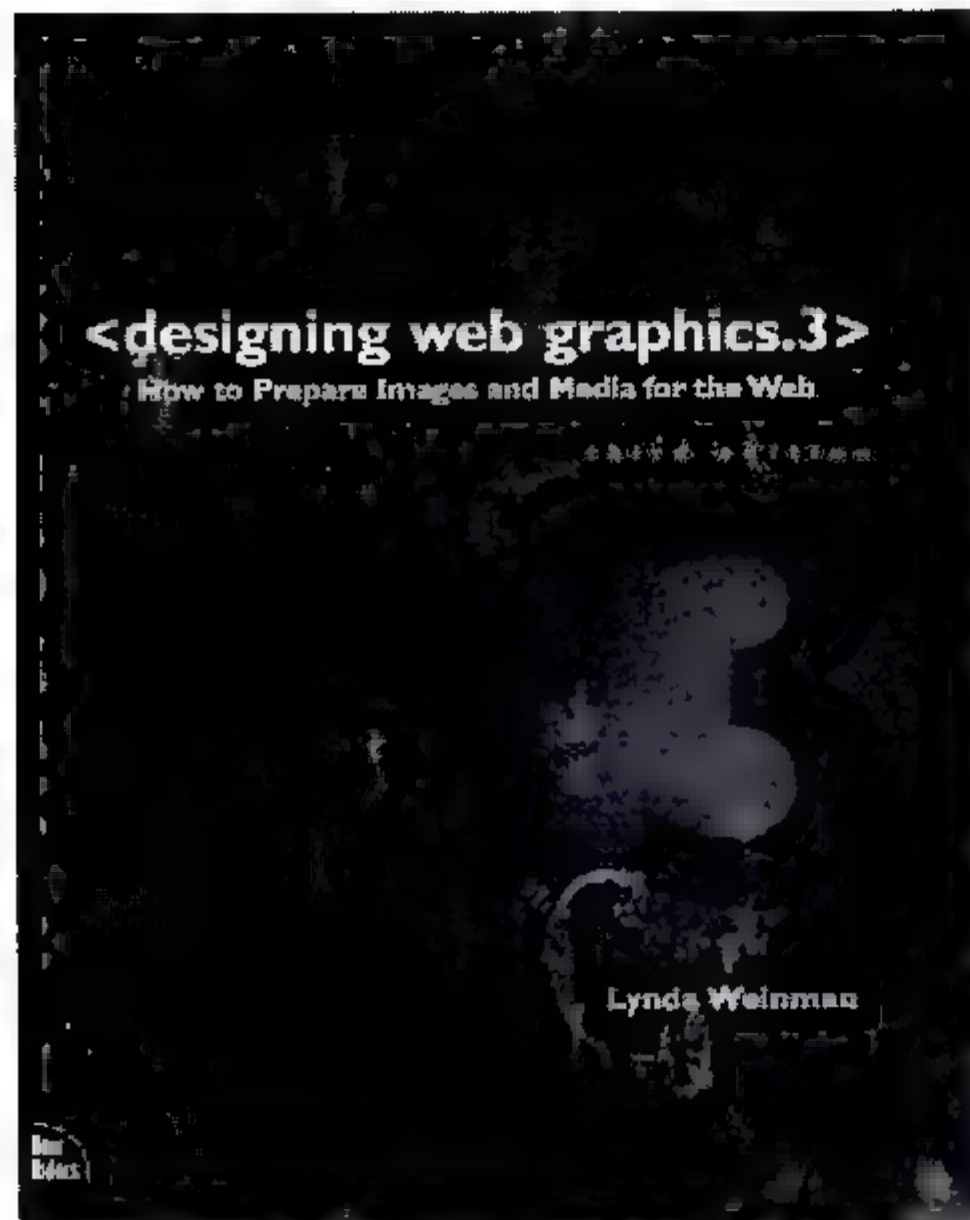
ator currently working in the field, or the person that just enjoys this medium of story and art interaction.

Scott has taken the time to not only write, but also to illustrate and then collect a terrific amount of information into this thought provoking volume. Great for anyone wanting to learn more about the industry of comic books.

Rated \*\*\*

Passing Comments: I believe the way to get the most out of *REINVENTING COMICS* is to go carefully, reading relatively small amounts over a period of time. Scott has given us so much that reading it in chapters seems to help you to absorb and retain the information.

*REINVENTING COMICS* is continued at [www.scottmccloud.com](http://www.scottmccloud.com)



<designing web graphics.3>  
How to Prepare Images and Media for the Web  
third edition  
By Lynda Weinman  
Published by New Rider  
User Level: All Users  
ISBN: 1-56205-949-1

Dreamweaver & CyberStudio / Photoshop 5.0 / ImageReady & Fireworks / Flash & Shockwave / Expanded Lessons for Rollovers / DHTML / Cascading Style Sheets / Color Aesthetic Guidelines / Design Strategies / Site Architecture / Navigation solutions / Aesthetic users for Frames / Alignment Techniques Using Tables & Layers / Portfolio Advice / Innovation Back-

ground Tile Design / PNG Transparency / QuickTime 3.0 / Font Embedding / Aesthetics of Animation Does all of this sound like another language to you? Well, these are just of the few things you'll be confronted with when you enter the world of designing for the internet.

You must be wondering why we would discuss a web design book in Sketch? Simply this: the internet is becoming the most cost effective way to promote your projects. I've decide to include books that may help you get the edge on designing for the net.

Lynda Weinman is one of the most knowledgeable writers for graphic design on the net. She has taught digital art classes at UCLA, San Francisco State, Art Center College of Design, and American Film Institute. What does this mean for us? Great, useful information in a book written to be understood by anyone with even a small working knowledge of the net! That's right, Lynda offers us the knowledge of creating our own animations, adding sound, and designing a site that looks good on different platforms in an accessible fashion. With this book in hand, you don't have to have a large amount of technical knowledge to start designing a very cool website.

With no dilution of the necessary information, Lynda has offered us a wider variety of subject matter then any other author.

<designing web graphics.3> is a must for any one doing design work in the crazy world of the internet. *dwg.3* is filled with graphics, charts and screen downloads to give us a hand on what she is explaining - classrooms of knowledge for the reader to use at his own pace.

Rated \*\*\*\*+

Passing Comments: I have read Lynda Weinman's first two books on designing on the web, and found a large amount of information in them to help with my digital design experiences. With the internet being a creature of change and growth we can only hope that Lynda will continue to guide us through it's sometimes dark and confusing halls, leading us to the bright side of the net and it's well designed web sites that work!

This is a book that you'll keep next to your monitor and refer to many times during a project.

For more information [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com)



# This is the last stand.

This is the part where we find out who is gonna stand and deliver and who's gonna run and hide.

by Beau Smith

If this were a western movie, and I mean a really good one, this would be the part when the handful of tough good guys starts walking down the dusty street to face off with the really nasty bad guys.

This is the last stand.

The comic book industry has come to that last stand. This is the part where we find out who is gonna stand and deliver and who's gonna run and hide.

Please don't let anyone tell you that comic book sales are good.

They're not.

X-Men, Spawn, Fathom, JLA, and other regulars of the Top Ten are still right up there on top of the pile. Problem is, it's a very small pile. Kinda like being king of the jungle, but the jungle's limited to just your own backyard.

are a visual medium. That's why people buy comics. The craft of being a good comic book writer plays heavily on the ability to mesh the art with the emotions of the story and the characters. So many seem to disregard this important point. If a comic becomes too text or word heavy, you run a large risk of losing that reader. Something about American comics culture rejecting that - time and again you've heard 'em say, "If I want that much writing I'll buy a book." It has to be a perfect dance between words and art. Not much fun to sashay on your lonesome in this saloon, it's gotta be a great collaboration.

The internet needs to become a larger, more powerful tool in the progress of comic books. Every faction of the

comic book business should be using the internet

you have to be ready to keep pushing that fat lady up the ladder yourself.

We've gone way past the blame game. Everybody's fingerprints are on the body; some have just stuck around a little longer to try and wipe 'em off. The guilty stains are on the collars of just about everyone attached to comics - the publishers, the creators, the distributors and retailers. We're all in that street, starin' through the lingering grime at the only blameless party in town - the reader. It's up to every one of us, as a whole, to please that reader.

I think this is the year we're going to start to see things begin to turn. We've seen some major industry changes the last few years, but now we're gonna see the ones that will shape or sap this community.

Focus must be put on the publishers, and what they're doing to try and make the very best in entertainment come through in comics. First and foremost, we have to remember that comic books

like a government mule. This business has lost a whole lot of readers to the internet, but they sure didn't leave us to read comics on the web. What we've lost is a big chunk of their entertainment time. They spend more time on the web, and less reading printed material.

Our printed material.

We need to go and go hard to where they're at, and use that same internet that's rustling our audience as the cattle prod to steer 'em back to reading comics. Make it a full range situation. Use the web to take back the time comics have lost. Use it to build a larger business, one with a far greater reach.

Distribution should be using the internet to a much greater extent, finding an even wider range of venues to sell through. It has never been easier to be global. The cost is low, and in some ways it is still the wild frontier. Now's the time

to embrace a little adventure and try new, untested things to create a larger base to sell to. Just because it's always been done one way in the past doesn't mean it still works now. It doesn't. It's time to get aggressive.

Distributors aren't just selling comic books anymore, now they sell a great variety of items. Most have become distributors of more overall 'pop culture'...comics, books, toys, videos, dvd's, art prints, posters, etc. The door to the outside world should get a little easier to open with more diverse product to grease the chute for comic books. I would hope that the fine line between being a distributor/manufacturer will not hinder or detour a distributor's focus. That focus should be selling and pushing their vendors' product to as many suitors as possible.

The retail community of the direct market found out a long time ago they cannot simply put product on the shelf and let it sell itself. The core of direct market retailers still out there fighting the good fight have found they must try some very daring tactics to promote new sales. No longer should they be labeled as "comic shops"; they have become pop culture centers of retail. They should be treated as such. But retailers know much of the work lies on their shoulders, and that the only real help they are going to get is from within themselves. You cannot depend on the publisher or the distributor to clear the debris, you have to cut that path yourself. If you get help from them - great - if not, you have to be ready to keep pushing that fat lady up the ladder yourself. It's great to be a part of a team, but it's even better to know how to take care of yourself when you feel alone on the field.

Make no mistake—comics are not dead.

It's the changing of the guard. It's the thinning of the herd. You're going to see some turn tail and run, claiming there are bigger and better things in "The Outside World". That comic books are a thing of the past. Well, paint a yellow stripe down their back and kick 'em in the butt on their way out. That kind of attitude we don't need. Those guys aren't up for our challenge. Nobody ever said life was easy. The real test is this: while you're going to "The Outside World", take comic books with you! Show the world what cool can be. We have plenty of cool in the comics biz, make 'em take notice.

You'll continue to see the ones that



love to hear their own whine as they talk about "how it used to be." Get over it. Those days are gone, done, and silted over. Fill out an application for MTV's Real World and join the rest of the self absorbed cry babies. We don't need to hear it. We have plenty to do.

You'll see some keep trying the same lame marketing and promotional tactics from the late 80's and early 90's. We should all have that much time and money to waste. It's time to get experimental. Nothing is too far fetched to try. If one thing doesn't work, try something else. Bottom of the boot is to not be afraid to roll your sleeves up a little. Let's get creative.

Trade publications and magazines about comics are going to have to promote comics like never before. They are going to have to seek out comics that are really good and deserve to find an audience. The urge to push only those comics plunking down large wads of advertising dollars has to be tempered. The urge to push only their personal favorites will have to be reigned in a bit. True feature articles would be a nice change of pace. Don't just reprint press releases, make them stories. It's great to be witty and clever within the pages of your magazine; it's bad to come off like the frat boy on his first beer, issue after issue, time after time...after... time. At some point, more in-depth interviews, real features and solid

## Choose to walk down that dusty street and meet the bad guys in whatever form they appear.

reviews should be done with regularity. If not....well...Taco Bell is always hiring.

The one thing the reader can do to help make comics all they can is this: when you buy a comic book—read it. Then, let the publisher know what you think! Let them know what you would like to see more of. Really tell them what you would like to see less of. If everyone that bought a comic book would give some feedback to it's publisher, we'd see some massive change begin. Readers, don't be afraid to try something different. Come on. Look around and find new books that could be enjoyable. Tell others about 'em. Then, work that web - it's great for that very important reader feedback, but nine times out of ten it's the same 25 people taking the time and trouble to input. For every 25 that send an email or post a message there are 2,500 that don't say a word, but have strong feelings about the books. We need that silent majority to speak up. It'll be better and more enjoyable for all of us. Get involved.

As a writer and creator of comic books for over 14 years, I have read every single letter that has ever been sent or forwarded to me. I really want to know

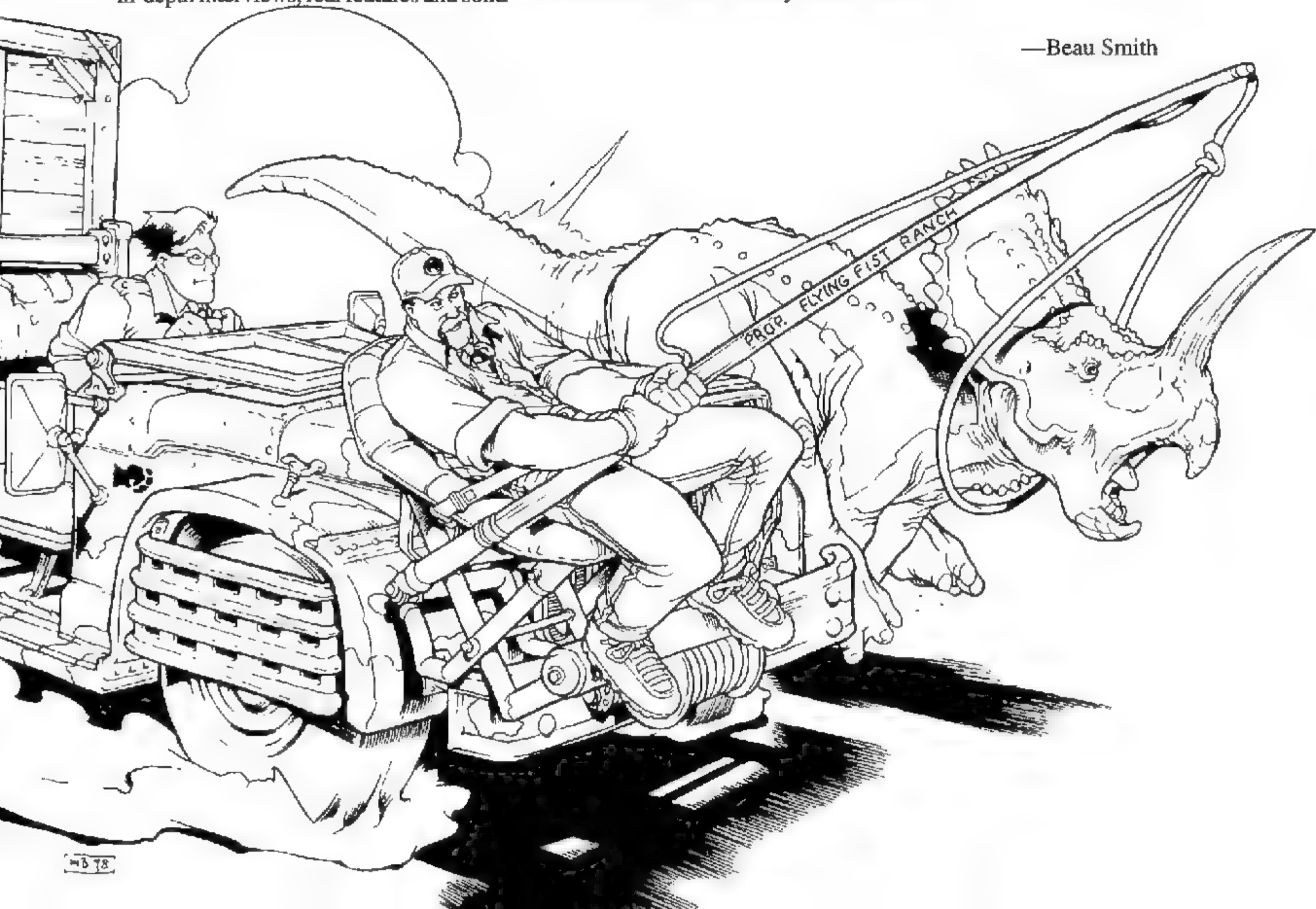
what the readers that are throwing down money on my stuff think. I may not always agree with them, but I wanna know their thoughts just the same. Even though I love the letters from people that love my stuff, I am even more interested in the ones that don't. They never let you entirely off the hook. That kinda mail keeps you thinking and on your toes. If all I wanted was praise, well....I've never had a problem with standing in front of the mirror and throwing compliments at my reflection.

This summer as you go to the conventions, shows, and local stores, take a good look around. See the changes. As you hear all the talk, listen to the words and deflect the donkey dump from the true meanings. Decide for yourself that you're not a quitter. Choose to walk down that dusty street and meet the bad guys in whatever form they appear. Let em' know that this is your town and they have no place in it.

The world of comics. If you really love 'em, like I do, then now's the time to back them up.

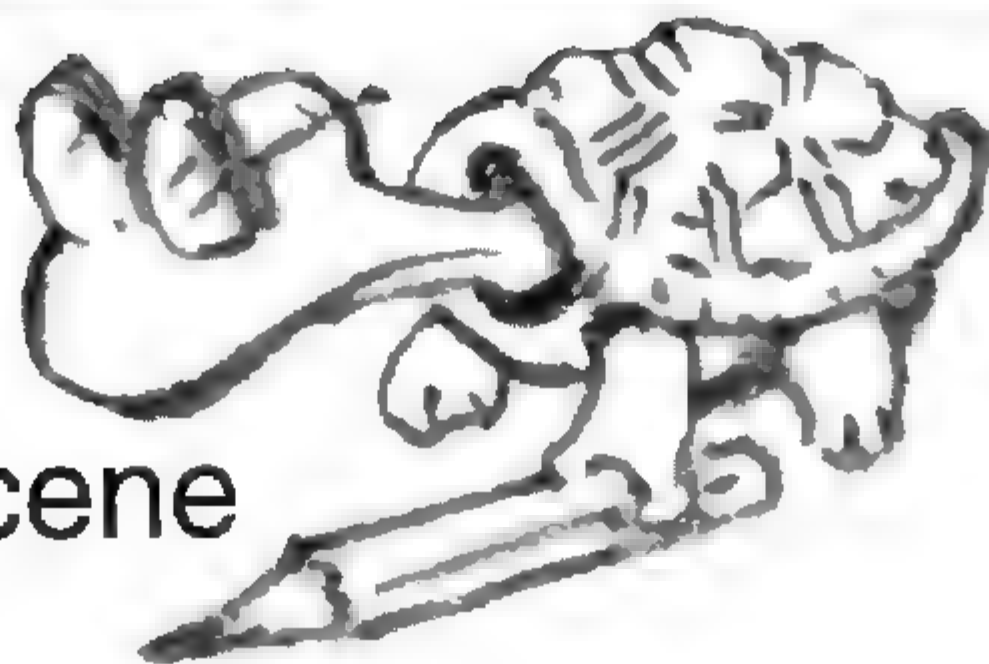
Let's make our move.

—Beau Smith





## ILLUSTRATION



# Seeing the Scene

by Flint Henry

Hello there, Pencil Posse! And welcome! We here at Sketch certainly hope you're enjoying this issue.

Say - you're anxious to draw super people, aren'tcha?! Sure, sure - you can't wait to whack the comics world with your own incredibly cool, vastly visionary and soon - to - be - ubiquitous uniqueness (since you're

gonna shatter all today's standards and set the new stylistic pace)! Wait 'til comicdom sees your version of the fiercest mutant, the hottest hottie, the most macabre monstrosity, the most awesome anime-inspired character that - Waitaminute!!

**the character's environment has to look correct and believable for the character - and it's story - to be believable and enjoyable**

Wow! Your enthusiasm is to be admired, you can never have enough, and you never want to lose it. I wish you the best on becoming the next super sought after Top Ten pencil pusher (I'll be watching), but before starting, here's something to ponder: your figure drawing and personal style may indeed be monumental, but when you're done with your incredible character; what about the stuff that surrounds it? The environment and background that provides the set, the "stage" for your troupe of character "actors" to live in and interact (and tune each other up)?! And now, there's also something you have to do: quite literally, look around.

Look. around. Take your time. It's important.

Lots of people are interested in becoming comic book artists; they just love to draw the wild array of cool characters. That's great. For many, however, their rendering interest begins -

and almost ends - with the figure(s), especially in some wild action stance or heroic pose. The figure becomes the sole emphasis of their story telling, as evidenced by the mass of "splash happy" books over the last few years.

Well we love our characters, and they certainly deserve to be dutifully and respectfully rendered. But - so does their comic world, with all it's particular details and nuances. Whether it's the Empire State building or a planet - sized, monumental DNA helix; an organic, sentient starship or the latest S.U.V - the character's environment has to look correct and believable for the character - and it's story - to be believable and enjoyable. And that enjoyment keeps us coming back, and wanting more!

During his or her career, a comic artist will be required to imagine and design things, as well as render real objects. Both tasks must be carried out with equal plausibility. It's important to be aware that as a comic book artist, you will be expected to know how to draw it all. Not just your favorite character or other subject(s) you have enjoyed sketching and drawing time after enjoyable time. Everything. Quickly, and within (usually short) time constraints.

You can argue that you'll become one of the superstar set that takes months and months to produce an issue, but most pencilers (or anyone involved in a commercial art field) don't have that luxury - and most people that really know their way around a page don't need it! For most artists there's not much lag time, and little allowance for "bad" or "off" days. So until you reach that level of 'what incredible luxury vehicle should I buy today' status - can you sit down and draw that same sweet ride? Realistically, and in a reasonable amount of time? Almost everyone has some

degree of difficulty in this area. Hopefully, this article will make you aware of the significance of comic book props, locations, and settings. It's very important you recognize your strengths and weaknesses in rendering the vast multitude of environments that you'll be expected to produce.

Until the recent commonality of the computer as a studio tool, a comic artist didn't simply transfer a pre - existing "real" visual to paper, he or she had to rely on their personal graphic skills and abilities. If drawing a car, the car drawn is as good, or "real", as the artist's skill level (or effort). The car's "existence", and the reader's acceptance of it, depends on the artist. It's great to have a very personal or heavily exaggerated style. Personal vision is important and impactful, and there are numerous stars that brought their own cutting - edge vision to the field to great success. However, if you are directing your efforts towards a regular mainstream book, chances are that your editor should readily recognize the car you drew as something that could be parked in the lot outside.

To be a good artist (comic book or otherwise), you have to draw well. There's no way around study, self - discipline, and countless hours of practice. As a comic book artist you'll be drawing an endless variety of things beyond your favorite stuff, much of it not nearly as much fun or interesting as you'd like. You'll be expected to be a realist, as well as a boundless imagineer. But first "Learn to See".

This is your first task, and you may find it a bit more difficult to overcome than you would think.

Remember, as a comic book artist, you never ever stop working. As you look and "see" your world - the look and shape of things, the play of light, how things work - you're adding to your mind's reference base, which you'll continually be tapping for your imagery. But as you sharpen your eyes you'll sharpen your skills. "Seeing" will accelerate your learning the basics, and help you develop your own shortcuts and personal approaches to problem solving. After you begin to "see", your mind is training your hand to translate all those amazing personal mental images to bristol. That's when the real fun begins - and the challenge of comic artistry continues!

So - see you around!!

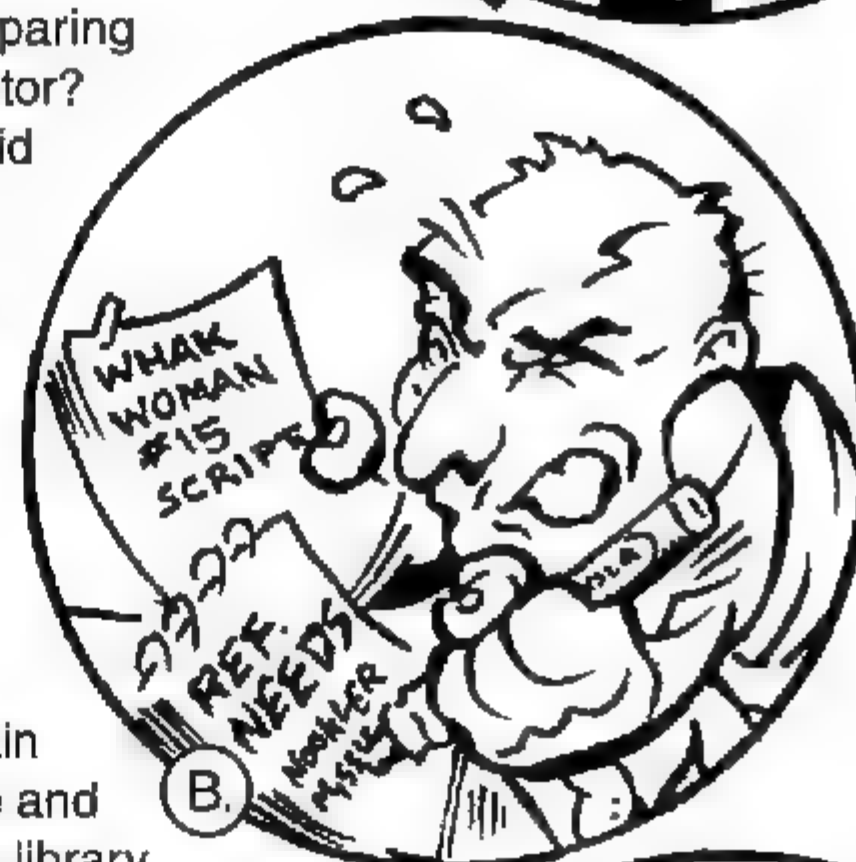


Here's a fast and easy quickstep through some basic "panel 'n' prop" construction to help warm up that environment - visualizing eyesight.

A. Get "Rrreadyy to Rrenderrr", 'coz your editor's notified you your assignment's on it's way. Whether tight or relaxed, the deadline is now omnipresent and etched in stone. Start planning your time to meet it before the work reaches your door, adjusting your current workload and deadlines accordingly.



B. Once you get the script or plot read it over. Make notes, preparing yourself for any foreseeable problems. Need more info from the editor? Put the call in now, and have all the specifics written down to avoid confusion.



Where does the story take place, what kinds of backgrounds are needed? Make a list of things to look at - or for, but make sure you can get all the visual information you'll need to do the particular job, and have it ready for when you need it. As the deadline gets closer, last minute reference gathering can become a painfully time consuming task.

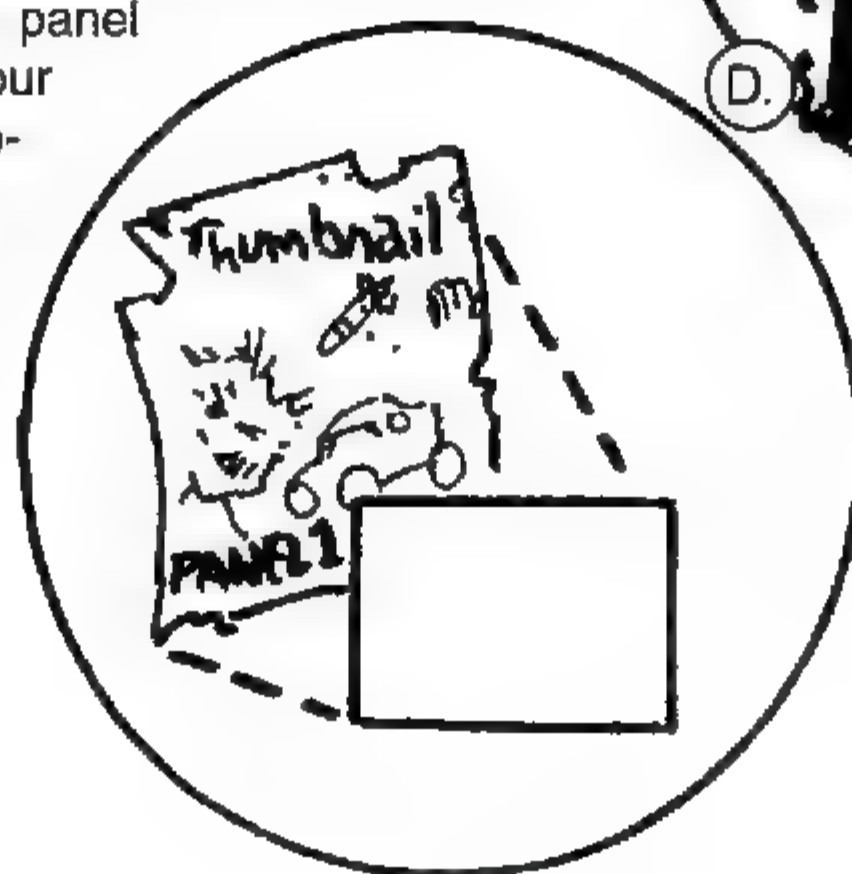
C. Reference is key, for a commercial artist it can prove to be one of the most valuable cards in your hand. Fortunately, it's easier to obtain than ever - TV, DVD, tape, the computer. Cut up old magazines, save and organize particular categories of subjects for easy perusal. Go to the library, or go to the bookstore and spend judiciously on a "perennial" for your personal collection. Have a Polaroid? There are few greater luxuries than a live model in just the pose you need; get some friends and take some snaps. Being able to see a complex object from any angle is always a help, so a jaunt to the toy store can be a worthwhile trip. Get a good model of that troublesome car, motorcycle, tank, or helicopter. It also gives you a chance to pick up that very necessary action figure - you know the one you have no practical use for; but really need!



Don't fall into the easy trap of using other comic artists' work for "real" object reference. Depending on who you're looking at, no matter how popular the artist, the work can vary heavily in quality. Since you're not familiar with the object in question (or you wouldn't be copying it), you won't even be aware of the mistakes you're possibly imitating. Always do your homework. Depending on the assignment, don't even think about cheating, especially when doing 'heavy gear' and 'hardware'. Draw the particular plane or vehicle that's called for, it's particular traits may be critically important to the story. Don't draw an M-16 if a B.A.R. was specified. Respect your writer and editor. If you're doing a hardware intensive book, have a good idea of what a real gun looks like. Don't insult your audience. This can mar work by even the greatest of talents, giving it a jarringly amateurish feel.



D. Now start to lay out your page and begin panel breakdowns. The whole page must have an overall visual flow, start by concentrating on the story elements panel by panel\*. With the 'stages', or levels of your panel 'set' in mind, zip out as many thumbnails (tiny, even vague roughs that might make sense only to you) as necessary to firm things up to your liking. It may take only one, but any number will do until you get it "just right" - sometimes the clock will help you decide.





## ILLUSTRATION

With all the elements and their various relationships to each other (and the page) in mind, now begin to translate that mental image and visual shorthand into an actual pencilled panel. Choose and define the panel shape and size for your thumbnail.



E. Your image will work best if things fit easily and clearly into three main levels - the fore, mid, and back grounds - of the panel 'set'. Lightly and loosely, begin to place your key elements within the panel frame.

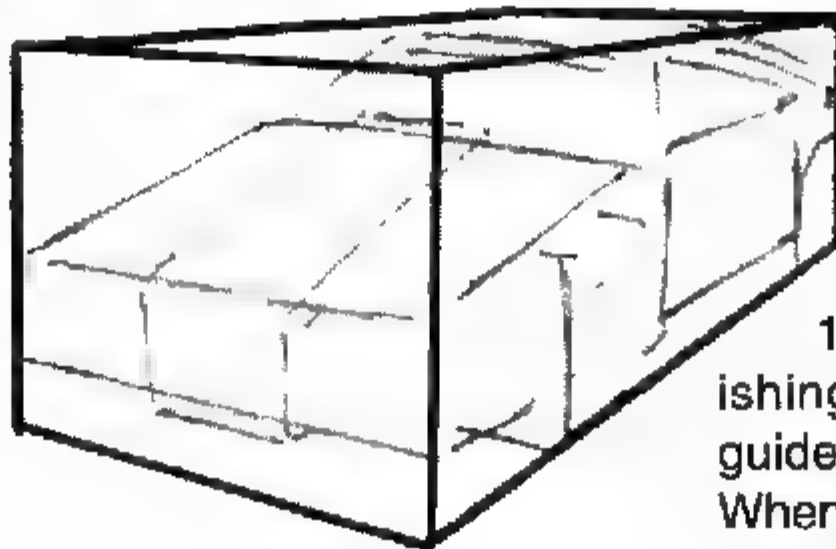


F. Whether working from a plot or script, keep in mind your panel will contain some possible mix of balloons, captions, and sound effects. These text elements might afford you a few shortcuts, as they'll fill some of the frame - don't waste time pencilling something that's bound to get covered over.

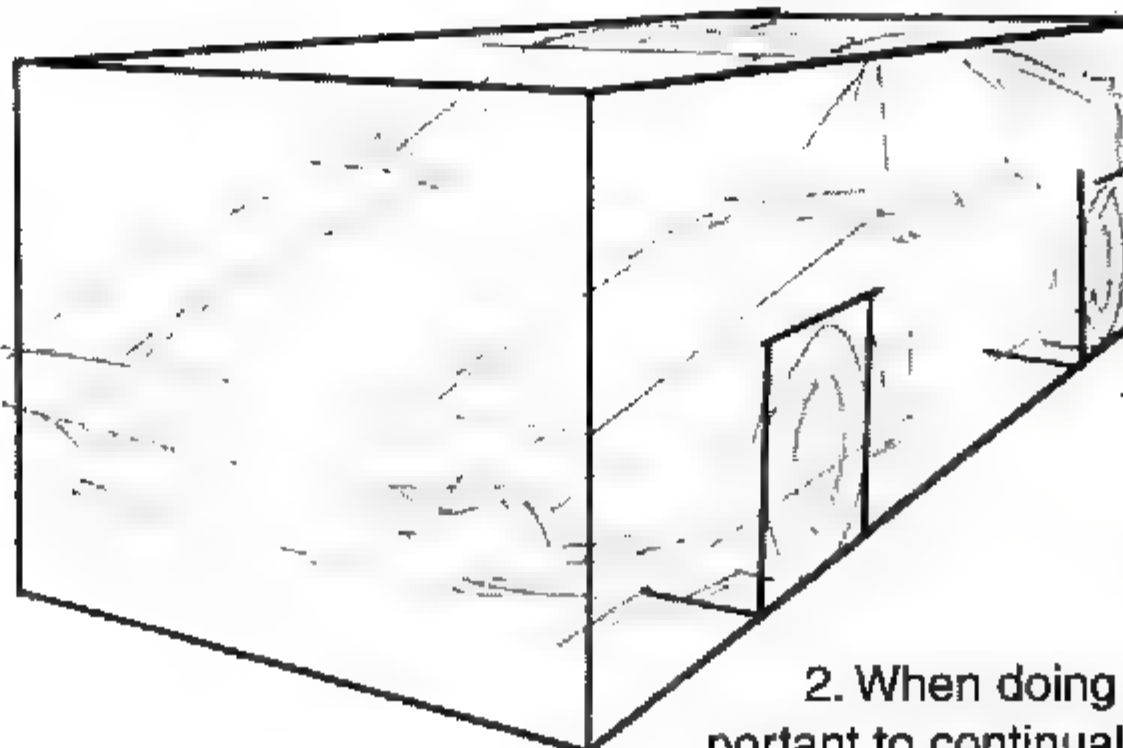


G. Now you have everything established, so start to tighten those pencils and fill things in. We're concerned with 'seeing' and establishing environments, so let's step (carefully) around your foreground superperson and check out that car on the second, 'middleground' level of the panel stage - time to draw some gear!

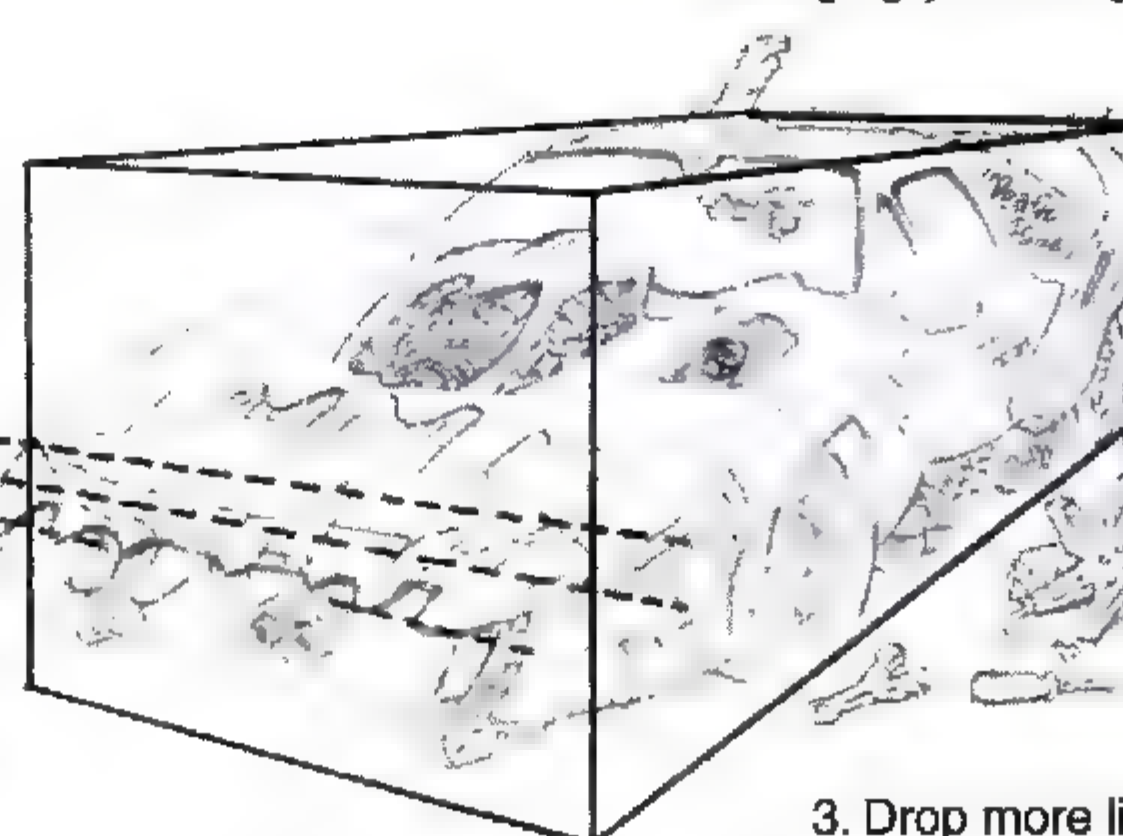
Depending on your comfort or skill level, you can do the following steps 1-4: directly on the final bristol art board; as a series of overlays; or a separate single piece of paper you can enlarge or reduce; then lightbox back onto the final board.



1. After fixing your horizon line and vanishing points, lay down some fast straight guidelines and begin to 'box' the car's bulk. When drawing a complex object, try envisioning it in simple geometric forms and work up. Try thinking in 3D, 'cutting' and sculpting that simple form with your pencil until it begins to resemble the desired shape. Use as much reference as possible, tailored to how real or conceptual you want the vehicle to be.

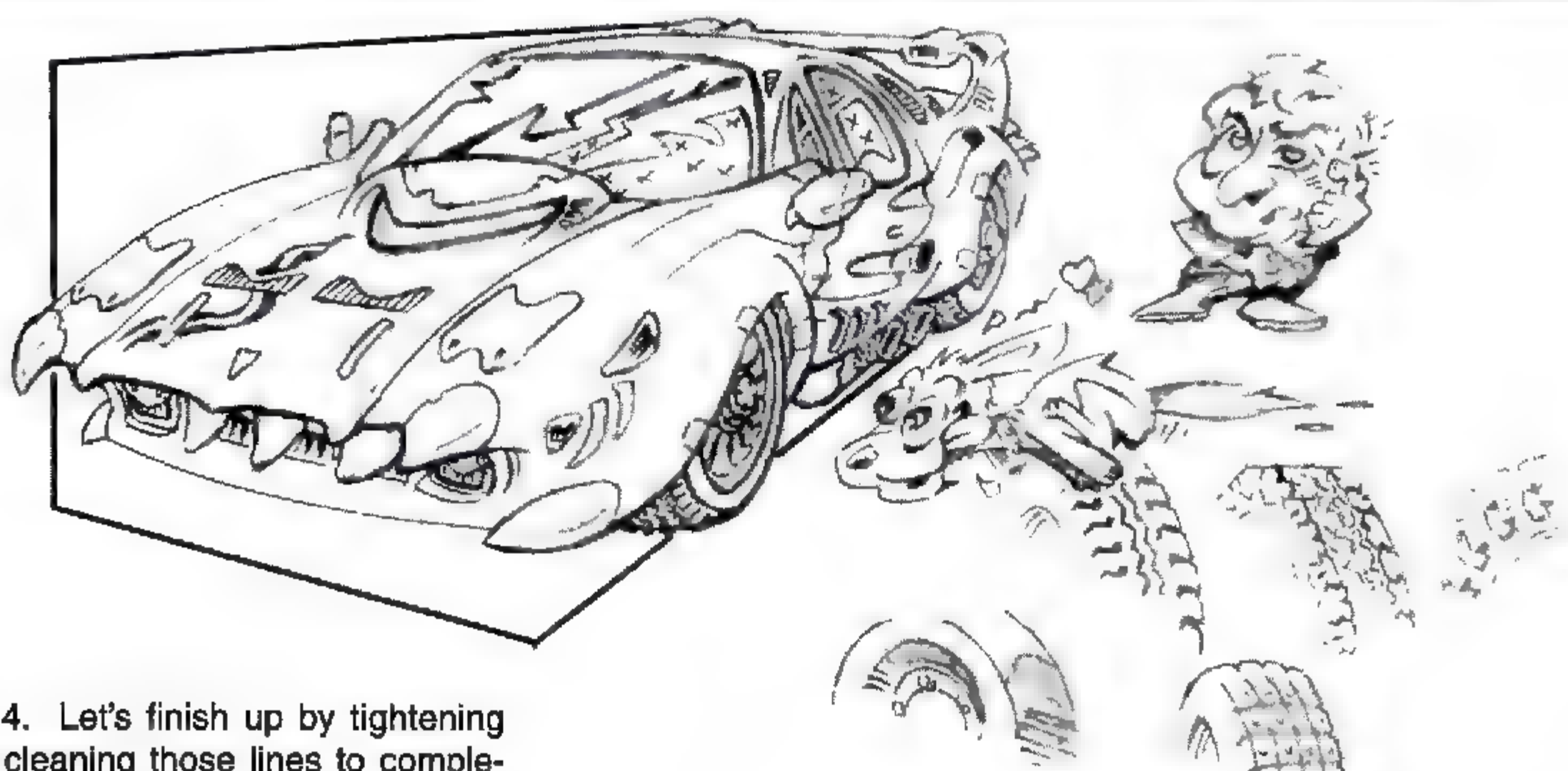


2. When doing a vehicle freehand, it's important to continually check the proportions of individual sections against each other as you go. Is the hood the right length when compared to the trunk? Does the passenger area look correct in respect to the amount of passengers it should hold? Don't hesitate to keep changing your rough linework.



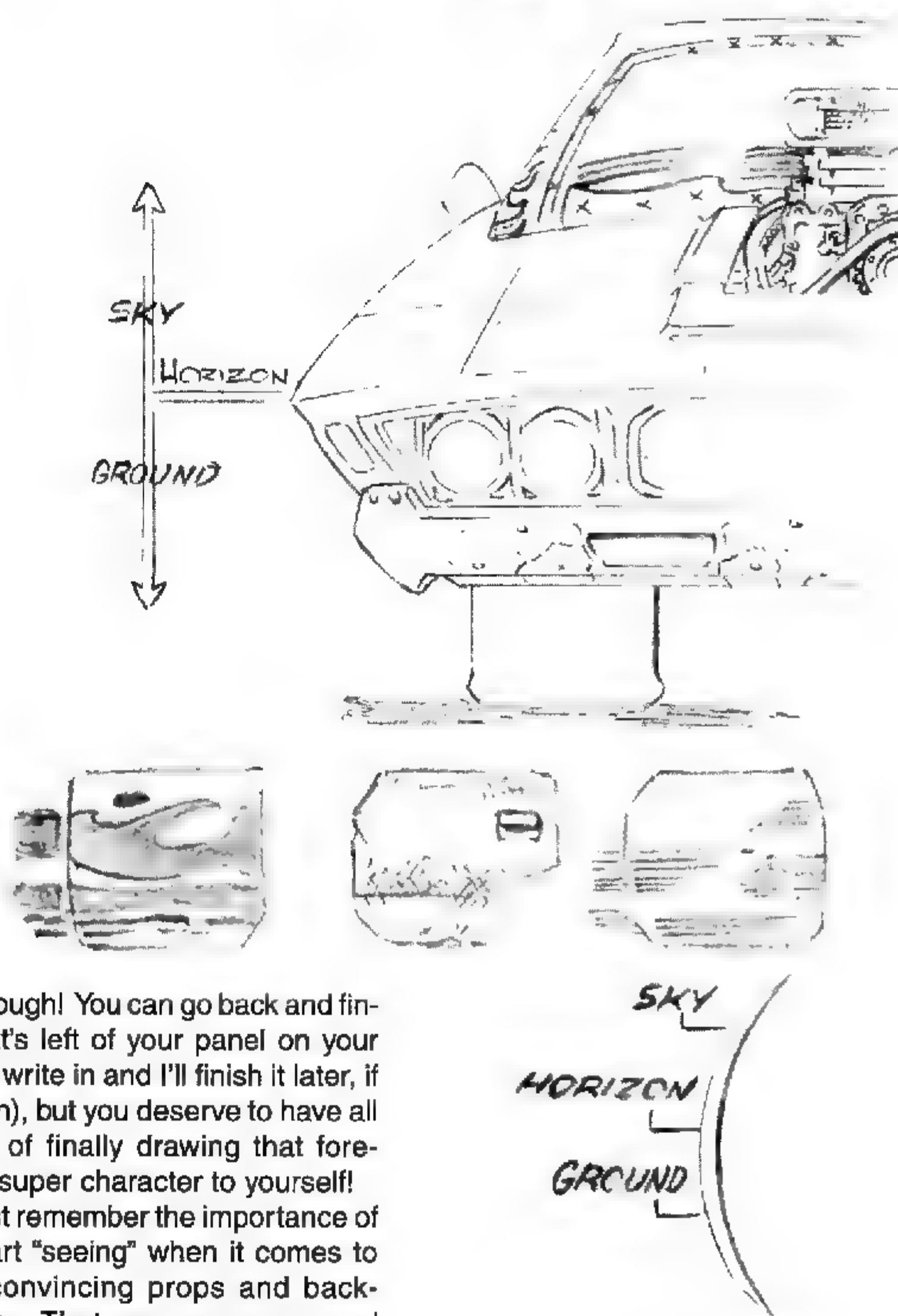
3. Drop more lines to the vanishing points to keep things like headlights, bumpers, and the occasional death ray aligned and in proper relation to the rest of the vehicle. We're not doing a hardcore precision drawing here. It's in the panel middleground, so we're not going to spend unnecessary time gridding it out - we're drawing for comics, not product designers - but it has to look real. Any inaccuracy too awkward or jarring will draw the reader's eye, ruining story flow.





4. Let's finish up by tightening and cleaning those lines to completion. Whoa Momma! That's one sweet ride. Now, work in lighting in accordance with the rest of the panel. You'll execute things like cast shadows and various shadings in your own particular style (crosshatching, etc.), but Ex.5 shows some easy basics of auto lighting. Pretend your ride is made of mirrors: up-facing surfaces bounce back sky, vertical surfaces reflect the horizon line (and whatever might be looming on it), and everything below the horizon line reflects ground (and everyday ground objects like shell casings, bodies, etc.).

When tightening your gear pencils, keep in mind that some precision tools like clear plastic templates, triangles, and french curves can really help give your piece a smooth, professional touch. Circle and ellipse templates are time saving necessities (gridding out and drawing wheels, in particular, can be a real headache). Speaking of headaches, you can save your inker a couple by taking the time to "heavy up" appropriate lines on your drawing to help clarify the various overhangs, projections, wings, etc. on your heavy gear. Finally, it should be stated that gear and hardware relate to their possessor and story setting. It backs up the character's personality, as well as the context of the story. Little visual nuances can say a lot. Even things like tire treads can state important character qualities like "sophisticated touring car and gentleman driver", "Euro luxury speedster and playboy", or "post - nuke Pinto". You can only guess who would drive a Pinto, post - nuke or otherwise.



Enough! You can go back and finish what's left of your panel on your own (or write in and I'll finish it later, if you wish), but you deserve to have all the fun of finally drawing that foreground super character to yourself!

Just remember the importance of comic art "seeing" when it comes to doing convincing props and backgrounds. That way your gear and comic environments, whether actual or imagined, will look Real to the reader when he or she cracks the cover - one of the most important accomplishments to achieve for a truly enjoyable comic!

For more in-depth information on page design and story telling, refer (respectively) to Paul Sizer's excellent article in Sketch #1 and Joe Corroney's ongoing penciling feature in Sketch #2



# The Universe at Your Finger Tips

## Thoughts on Scripting Comic Books

by Tom Bierbaum

We've started getting questions tossed our way from you readers out there, so let's dive into the mailbag and see what you folks would like to talk about:

I'll paraphrase these questions, since I don't have the original letters in front of me at the moment.

### 1. *What should I include in a story synopsis?*

There's no clear-cut answer, of course. You have to use your judgement.

First, if you can get an editor to tell you what he wants, listen to what he asks for and give it to him. But assuming that's not feasible (especially if you're afraid of looking like an idiot

scarce and valuable money on you? Figure that out and get it on paper.

Above all, hit the editor with the one (or more) facets of your idea that make it a lead-pipe cinch to dazzle the readers. What's the twist? Where is the emotional wallop? What is the discovery or revelation that will make your story a must-read?

Of course your synopsis includes a title, a basic description of your concept, the tone you have in mind and the key characters, and a very concise description of the plot in its simplest form. You'll probably want to describe what format you're envisioning (is it a fill-in issue, mini-series, back story, or what?). But present all of those details in a lively, entertaining package. In

addition to selling the concept, you're selling your ability to entertain, and if you can't entertain the editor in this

synopsis, you're probably not going to be able to entertain the readers with your story. It's happened before that an editor has hated an idea but loved the creativity of the presenter and assigned him to something else as a result.

Way at the bottom, where it can be ignored by very busy editors, you might include a few background details about yourself — your credits and enough personal info to make the editor feel

like he knows you a little bit (hobbies, home town, the comic that got you hooked on the medium, shoe size, whatever detail might make the editor remember you and maybe root a little bit for you).

If it works, come up with a frame of reference to describe what you have in mind. We have a concept (copyrighted, so don't go "borrowing" it) that's basically "I, Claudius" within a superhero team. But be careful how you play this game. If you propose doing "The X-Men with a (fill-in-the-blank) twist," most editors are going to say mutants have been done to death and not even pay attention to the rest of your pitch. When you compare your idea to something, make sure it's a something that's novel and intriguing in a comic-book context.

In short, though, just imagine that you're scripting a movie trailer about your comic book and hear what that movie-theatre announcer is saying. Put down on paper the words that would make those \$7 just fly out of your wallet and into the theatre cashier's greasy little paws because you just HAVE to see the "movie" you're describing.

Once you've got those "movie-trailer" words down on paper, find graceful, entertaining ways to slip in the additional information necessary to answer the basic questions the editor would ask before deciding he was seriously interested, and that's your synopsis.

Above all, though, keep it short and simple. No editor out there has extra time to go plowing through unnecessary verbiage, no matter how cute or well-thought out.

And avoid the trap we've sometimes fallen into of trying to work out all the little snags in your story right there on the page as you explain it to the editor. Don't leave obvious, important

**Remember what you're doing isn't really summarizing your story, but SELLING it.**

to that editor), here's what I suggest...

Remember what you're doing isn't really summarizing your story, but SELLING it. So give the editor (in as few words as possible, remember; he's already got a pile of hundreds of unread submissions on his desk), the information that will make him want to buy your story. What makes your ideas so good and unique that this editor ought to ignore all those other submissions and gamble his company's



questions and problems unaddressed, but don't spend time on anything that isn't 100% necessary to explaining and selling your story.

## 2. *What do I put into a bible?*

A bible is a series "handbook" that collects all the essential information future writers will need to plot and script stories so they fit smoothly into the envisioned universe. In some cases, there may not be any other writers who'll be using your bible. Maybe your editor wants you to work up that bible for his benefit, so he feels he understands the concept and can provide informed direction and guidance as you try to realize the concepts you're putting down in your bible.

Now you aspiring writers out there are unlikely to be asked to write a bible for a loooong time. In about 10 years of steady comic-book work, we've written only a couple. They're generally written by people responsible for directing other writers on a big, important project. But it's a fun exercise and does help you to think through and deepen the detail of your proposals. So in your copious spare time, try working up a bible for one of your favorite concepts. I'll bet you come up with a ton of new ideas and cool ways to increase the depth and interconnectedness of your universe.

But as with synopses, there are no hard and fast rules about what to include. You pretty much just have to imagine all the ways future writers could screw it up, and then put down on paper the information that will tell 'em what they're doing wrong before they do it. So, you give them the overall concept and the basic conflicts upon which the stories should hinge. You lay out some of the general story structures you envision and communicate the format in which

they'll have to work (maybe you need all single-issue stories, or want every issue

to begin and end with a splash page, or want to eliminate all thought balloons — this is the time to tell future writers about all these kinds of requirements).

Your bible should specify the tone or combination of tones you're going for (intense drama, slapstick comedy, campy adventure, etc.). You describe the setting and explain how things work in your universe (it might be a world completely bound by the scientific laws of the real world, it might be a mystical world, it might be a world of cartoon mayhem, etc.).

You give a thorough description of each major character in the series. Explore the strongest, most important aspects of each personality, their primary motivations, how they interact with the other characters, how smart they are, what their biggest flaws are, what their greatest strengths are, how they can be beaten, who they're secretly in love with, etc. You can also suggest or dictate speech patterns, idiosyncratic habits and key physical characteristics.

And don't forget to provide at least a brief description of all the supporting characters that will play any kind of ongoing role in your universe. If it's a humorous concept, you'd better give everyone lots of ideas for where the humor is supposed to come from. In the case of super-heroes and other action characters, you'll want to explain their powers and/or weaponry, its limitations and permutations. And if the characters are going to be working with a lot of equipment, it's your job to identify and describe that equipment.

A lot of comic-book bibles include sketches of the key characters, setting and equipment, which is, of course,

**But a bible can also do the opposite. It can serve as a pep talk and a source of inspiration,**

vital information for all artists. But, as a writer, that shouldn't be your worry (unless you have to tell the artist what to do, but let's not get into that right now).

Perhaps most important of all, a bible should tell potential writers what you **DON'T** want in future stories. If every other proposal the company is getting involves vampires, tell them to forget the vampires. If you don't want future writers messing with the origins of your concept, tell them to stay away from the origin. If you hate stories where two heroes have a stupid misunderstanding and waste an entire issue punching each other's lights out, get that off your chest here and now, before some writer spends a week working up an all-fight plot.

But a bible can also do the opposite. It can serve as a pep talk and a source of inspiration, to coax some truly superior ideas out of your writers (and yourself). It can challenge them to break the molds, to find their inspiration in new, unexpected places, to reach deep within their own experiences and passions. Give those writers a few examples of the kind of excellence you're envisioning and you'll increase the chances they can produce it for you.

Well, I've managed to ramble on way too long on a couple of simple questions, so I'd better wrap it up here.

Next time, questions about what artists-turned-writers need to watch out for, and how to aim your story at specific age groups.

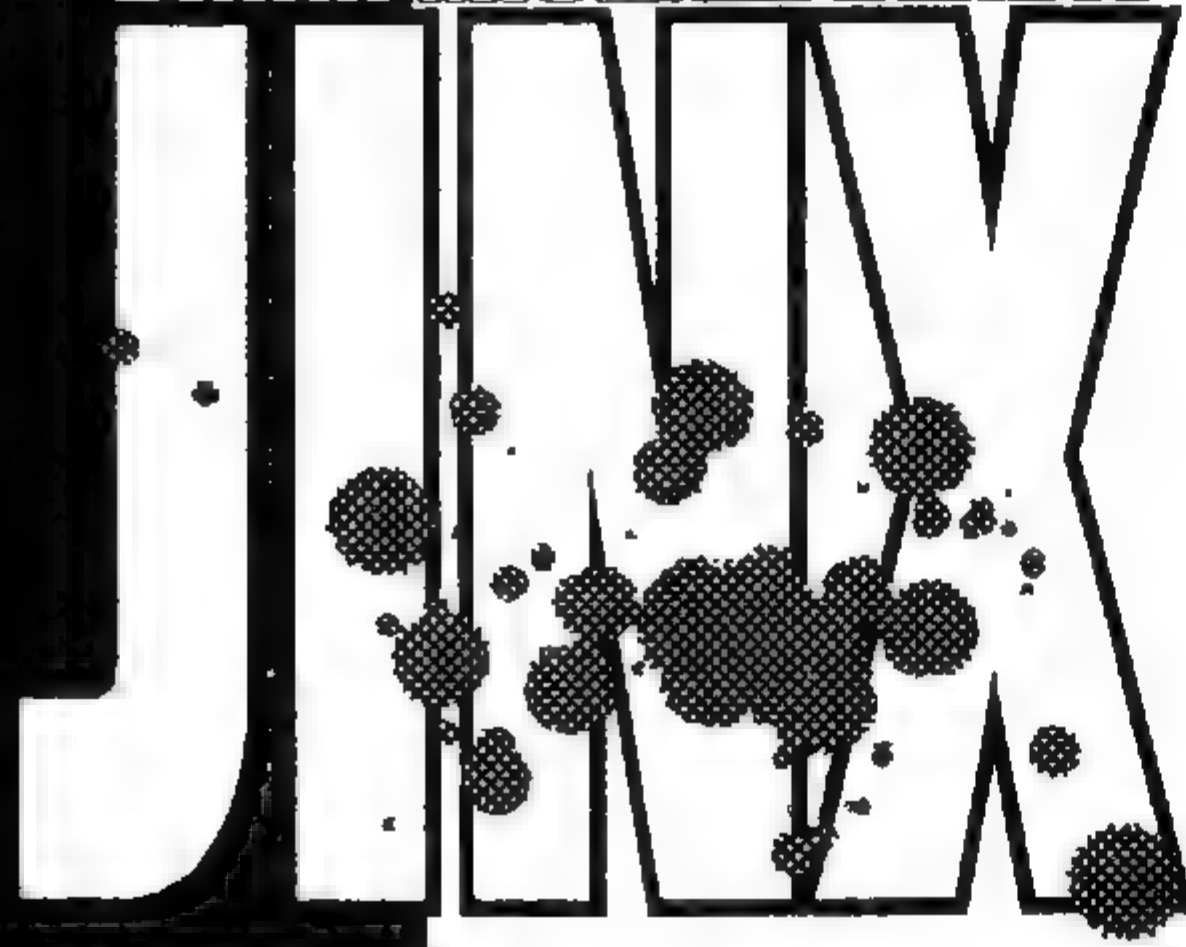
If you have any questions for Tom he can be reached at [tomb@bluelinepro.com](mailto:tomb@bluelinepro.com)



## WORDS

## The Making Of

BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS



by Brian Michael Bendis

Welcome to the making of *JINX*. I have had more requests for this than I've had people ask me if I want fries with that, and trust me that's a lot of people. . .

This section isn't a how to make a comic section. This is a how I make a comic section.

The following is a stream of consciousness list of my current philosophies and ideas. At the least it will serve as a sort of creators journal, to record where my brain was when I created this work.

I hope you find it fun and interesting

## PREMISE

The premise behind *JINX* came very easily.

After the success of my *A.K.A. Goldfish* graphic novel, I had found myself, FINALLY, with the beginnings of a real creators voice and style. The crime genre had overtaken my entire psyche. I was on fire. And I was in the position to take the chance of carrying my own regular series, no small feat I assure you. (but it ain't exactly brain surgery either, dig?)

Here's what I knew:

I knew I wasn't done exploring *Goldfish* as the every man in the life of crime character.

I knew that I hadn't explored the relationship of the crime riddled urban streets as they relate to the lawlessness of the old west, which is a huge running theme of mine.

I knew I was going to push myself into creating a real albeit dysfunctional relationship between an adult woman and adult male, which I had yet to do. My projects always seem to reek of male paranoia.

I had fashioned my plot, my motivations, my characters and their relationships.

I knew who *Jinx* was, where she came from, but I had no damn idea what this woman who had so captured my imagination was doing in this world of macho pinheads and greedy screw ups.

I knew I didn't want to make her another grifter, I had done that already with Lauren Bacall in *GOLDFISH*, and I hate consciously repeating myself ala Woody Allen.

I knew I didn't want to make her a cop because I didn't have anything to say about cops that the show *Homicide* hadn't already said for me.

So after whining and pining to my friends about how crap out of luck I was, the great god of stapled comics shined some light my way.

I got a call to do a freelance illustration, as often happens. I met this client in my local coffee shop that often seconds as the conference room for the studio, and in walked *Jinx*. In walked this hard, attractive tank topped, jean clad woman with a shock of hair and packing heat.

I asked her what she did for a living and she said: "I'm a bounty hunter" and I said: "like Deniro in 'Midnight Run'" She said: "EXACTLY like Deniro in 'Midnight Run'". And baby, was I in business.

This seedy, odd world of bounty hunting is staggeringly fascinating, and surprisingly underexposed in the world of popular fiction.

There's only been two movies that focused on it and if you think about how many movies have focused on cops, and P.I.'s and such, that's an amazingly low number. I had found an untapped well.

....and as far as comics went, who was my big competition...*Barb Wire*...HA!

So its off to the races for me....

## WRITING

There's a whole lot of so called rules to writing. These rules have been documented time and again by others far more industrious and intelligent than I, so I don't know what it is that I could add to it.

Instead I'll give you the mental check list that runs through my head when I am writing:

WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW. AND IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, GO RESEARCH IT.

When researching what became *JINX*, I talked to a ton of bounty hunters, cops, and others of the ilk.

First of all, it is a lot of fun. You get to act like you're a tough guy for a couple of minutes, without having to hurt anybody. Secondly, these people have stories to tell a thousand times more interesting and entertaining than anything you could make up...and they are TRUE. There are stories out there for the taking. Your genius is to figure out which ones, and when and where to tell them.



HEY, THAT'S A GOOD IDEA OR FUNNY LINE, IS IT FROM LIFE OR IS IT OFF THE T.V....

The only thing worse than a hack, is an ignorant hack. We do live in a multimedia super information highway and it is hard to keep it pure. But at least try...

#### MMMM-MMMM DIALOGUE

Good dialogue is something that I get the most credit for and have the least to say about. David Mamet says that having a good ear for dialogue is the professional ability to talk to yourself. I think it is more like... instead of listening to the voices in your head, let them talk to each other while you try to write it all down.

IF IT DOESN'T RING TRUE TO YOU, IT AIN'T GOING TO RING TRUE TO THEM...

This idea is hard to pin down. It's more a philosophy than a rule. Just think about it. Say it outloud to yourself.

#### LET THE CHARACTERS DO THEIR THING.

If you build your characters into the fully realized identities they deserve to be, they will dictate their actions to you. Real characters run the gamut of human emotion. They have contradicting attitudes, motivations, and ideals. Don't fight it, it's their story.

#### FREE THERAPY.

There hasn't been one relationship anxiety, or conundrum in my life that hasn't hugely benefited by the fact that I have a forum in which to address and analyze it. Nothing sings to the reader more then when you write from the heart. Seize the opportunity to explore yourself

#### FIRST DRAFTS ALWAYS SUCK.

You should see how many this took.

#### HA HA HA HA -OH NO!

A lot of writers, especially in comics, throw in every gag they can think of regardless to whether or not they are sacrificing the story momentum or mood of the piece. Anybody can write a gag, the geniuses know where and when its time to use them or cut them.

#### THAT'S WHAT YOUR MOM'S FOR.

Everybody has a mom or grandma to kiss your creative butt. What everybody needs is a core group of close friends and associates that aren't afraid to tell you when it ain't working. Find them and listen. Egos are for losers.

#### \*IT'LL NEVER BE PERFECT....

....but you have to keep moving forward. I whole heartedly recommend *STORY* by Robert McKee and *THREE USES OF THE KNIFE* by David Mamet.

Both excellent books on the real craft of writing.

## CHARACTER DESIGN

This part is a lot like making a movie...it's casting. Luckily, I don't have to worry about designing a silly costume that would never function in real life. But I do have to create identities for realistic people. I have to find a look that you will find appealing and not distracting, that I will want to draw thousands and thousands of times.

It's casting the perfect actor for the part, (literally as I use models) but not necessarily in the way you think, which we will get to momentarily.

I already had Goldfish's look left over from *AKA.*, and I knew Columbia was going to personify my male id, so all I was left with was Jinx.

Jinx has to be attractive, but not Va Va Va Voom, appealing but not to die for. I always cast models that run against the grain of my natural style to give my art a more well rounded and real tone.

Here are a couple of designs that I was pretty close to committing to.

This one is Jinx as a Hispanic or of Indian descent. Even though the look appealed to me I didn't think the ethnicity added anything to the narrative, in fact I think it would have eventually distracted from it.





## WORDS

This next one was close...REAL close. but in the end she was too babydoll looking. Too cute and young looking, not enough tough cookie.



So, along came D.D. Byrne. I had met D.D. years ago. She's a premier member of the Cleveland Ballet, and she was perfect. Her long angular face made great noir shadows. Her dancers body gave the illusion of a very fit athletic woman, that didn't look like a stairmaster freak.

...and she looks damn good in a tank top!

...and once D.D. got a hold of the character and her motivations....

**BINGO!!**





## MODELS/ PHOTO REFERENCE

This is one of those subjects that I think people have a misconception about.

First of all, the idea that photo reference is somehow cheating is ridiculous. Its the same as life drawing from a live model, except how many of you have friends that have nothing better to do all day then stand in your studio in funny poses. The only thing that I learned in five years of art school is: why HINT at the visual information, when you have the ability to GIVE it? Especially with a book based in the "real world" like mine.

Models are an invaluable tool in creating a tone and style that is consistent with the narrative.

Nothing is cheating, Comics are still in the larva stage. The only way for the medium to expand is for us to branch out and explore. Worst case scenario, we fall on our butt. Then we pick ourselves up and try something else.

In my opinion, the only thing that is "cheating" when putting together a comic page is lifting images, or even ideas from other artists. I know that this has been said many times and in many different ways by many different people, but tracing other people's line art and aping other's style (especially in a creator owned book), is embarrassing to you and your audience.

The trick to successful photo reference is not to be a slave to it.

The camera has only one eye, a lens, compared to your two eyes. That means that a lot of the camera's basic visual information is untrue.

Perspective, foreshortening and such can all be misperceived by the camera. The key is to know when and where the camera is your friend.

As shown, you can't just go shoot models. Just like a movie, you have to have a tight game plan. I have a very clear idea of what I'm going to do before I go bothering my friends.

I use natural lighting and no flash because it helps me discover new noirish shadows. Also flashes create shapes and shadows where there aren't usually.

The extra step I go to with my models is playing with improvisation situations, as if they were actually actors. I let the models play with the scene. This has uncovered certain body language, a stance and personality, that adds to each character having its own identity. In my layouts I might have Jinx and Goldfish hold a coffee cup the same way, basically the way I would, but spending a little extra time with the models, will show D.D. holding a cup one way, and John (Goldfish) holding it another.

I know that sounds like a little thing, something that nobody would even notice, but trust me it's not.

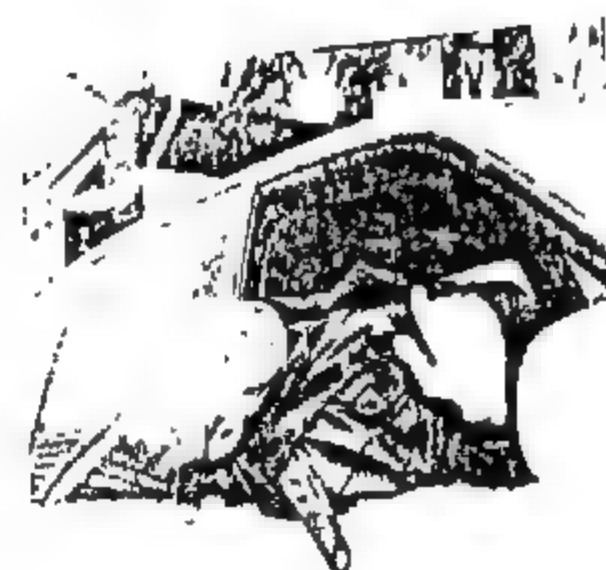
It's a whole world, a universe of difference.

Another thing I'm very sensitive to is the static look some artists get from using photo reference. I try very hard to let the shadows and line work take on a life past the static shot of the model.

ROUGH LAYOUTS



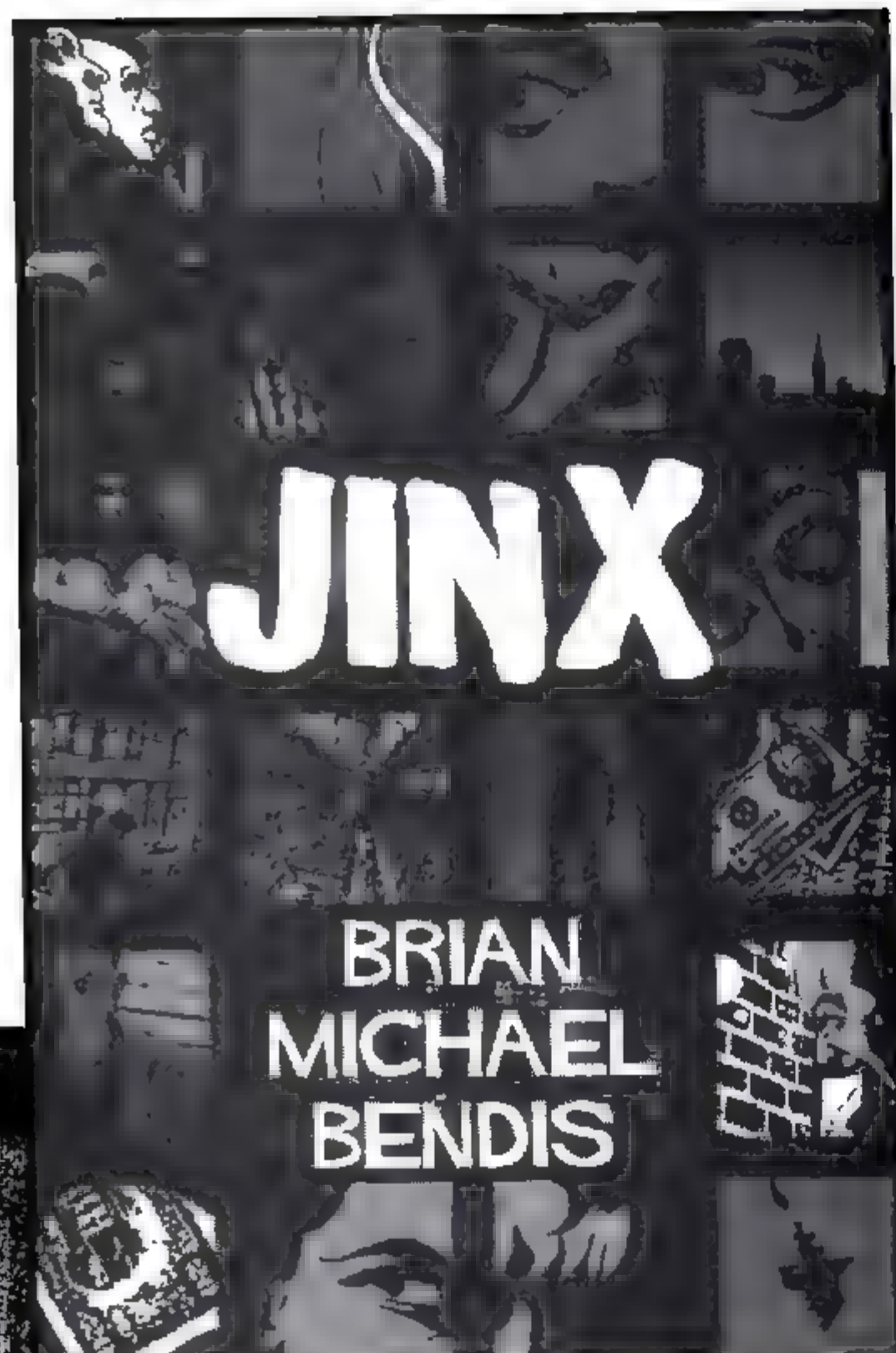
PHOTO REFERENCE



FINISHED ARTWORK



## WORDS



If It's Not There In  
An Hour...It's Free

Plus, my constant attempts at following in the footsteps of the great noir cinematographers like John Alton immediately abstract the art out of the "photo realistic" stage

## OVERALL

Here's the mantra list of philosophies that I run through while creating this work...

The Bendis PhotoShop philosophy (as stolen from Jurassic Park) **JUST CAUSE YOU CAN, DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD.** Everything in the world is a usable tool for comics, but you should know why you are doing it.

The streets are riddled with the dead bloated carcasses of work from creators that were so sure that theirs was the next **BIG THING**, or were into the "I'll create a book like so and so's, his sells, so will mine."

Peter Gabriel said it best. "Commercial Success is a fickle mistress. If you go looking for her, she'll avoid you. If you stay true to yourself, she'll come looking for you."...**KEEP IT PURE!!!**

Sting said that rock and roll is a bastard art form. What he meant is that it is a hybrid art form. When rock and roll regurgitates on itself, it fails, but when it looks outside itself and brings in country, jazz, opera etc, it thrives.

Same thing with comics. Comics isn't art or writing. Its not painting or line art. Its not poetry and screenwriting. It's all these things and more. All mixed in together to create the bastard art form of comics. But when comics regurgitate on themselves, it fails too.

To quote Paul Newman from Richard Price's fab screenplay for "The Color of Money": "If you're great at something, truly the **BEST**, rich can be arranged, rich can come fairly easy."

When all is said and done it's your name on the title, its your work in the book, its your butt on the line, and its probably your life's legacy. So, don't succumb to flavor of the month styles and genre, and don't underestimate your audience.

...but whatever you do try to stay out of trouble...

For more information on what Brian is working on check out his website at  
[www.jinxworld.com](http://www.jinxworld.com)

Sketch Magazine #6 will have an indepth interview with Brian which we'll discuss his working habits and what's going on with his many projects.

This article original appeared in **JINX** the graphic novel from Image Comics and is reproduced here with Brian's permission.

**JINX** and all related artwork and logos are copyright and trademark Brian Michael Bendis.



# Blue Line PRO

WWW.BLUELINEPRO.COM

BACK IN  
STOCK!!



## SKETCH BOOK SERIES

Blue Line offers two different sizes of Sketch Books. A Regular 8 1/2" x 11" size and the Traditional 11" x 17" size both are filled with 200 pages of 70 lb. art paper. Both have hard covers with library quality stitch binding for durability and makes it easier to draw without an art table.

### SKETCH BOOK REGULAR (8 1/2" x 11")

This standard sized hard covered book offers anyone with the ability to pick up a pencil the opportunity to draw. An artist could create their own library of sketches. Great for when you don't want to carry a sketch board around or your just sitting around with your friends. Also a good way to collect artist signatures and sketches at conventions!

Item #BL1010 / 200 pg. Hard cover book. **SRP \$24.95**

### SKETCH BOOK TRADITIONAL (11" x 17")

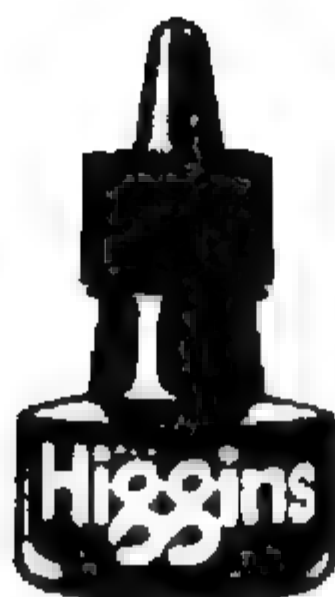
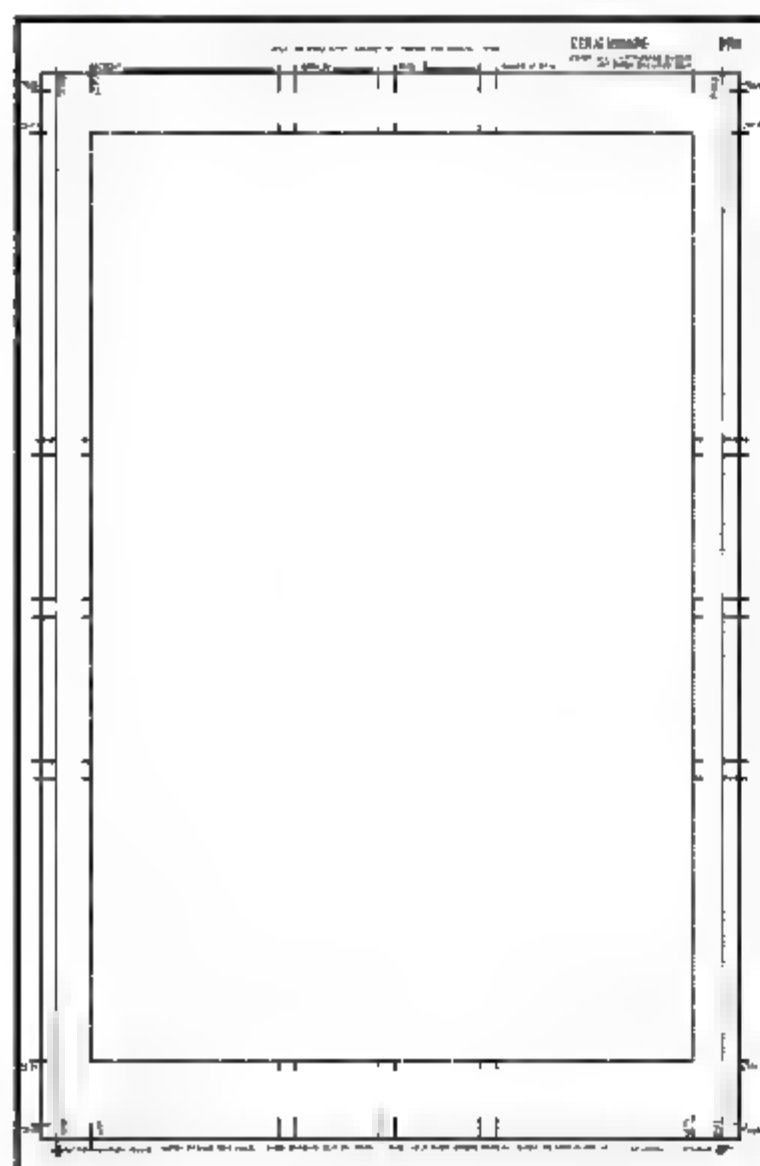
This Sketch Book offers the artist the ability to draw the size they're going to draw their original comic book pages.

Item #1011 / 200 pg. Hard cover book. **SRP \$27.95**

COMIC BOOK  
ART BOARDS

CUSTOMIZED PAPERS

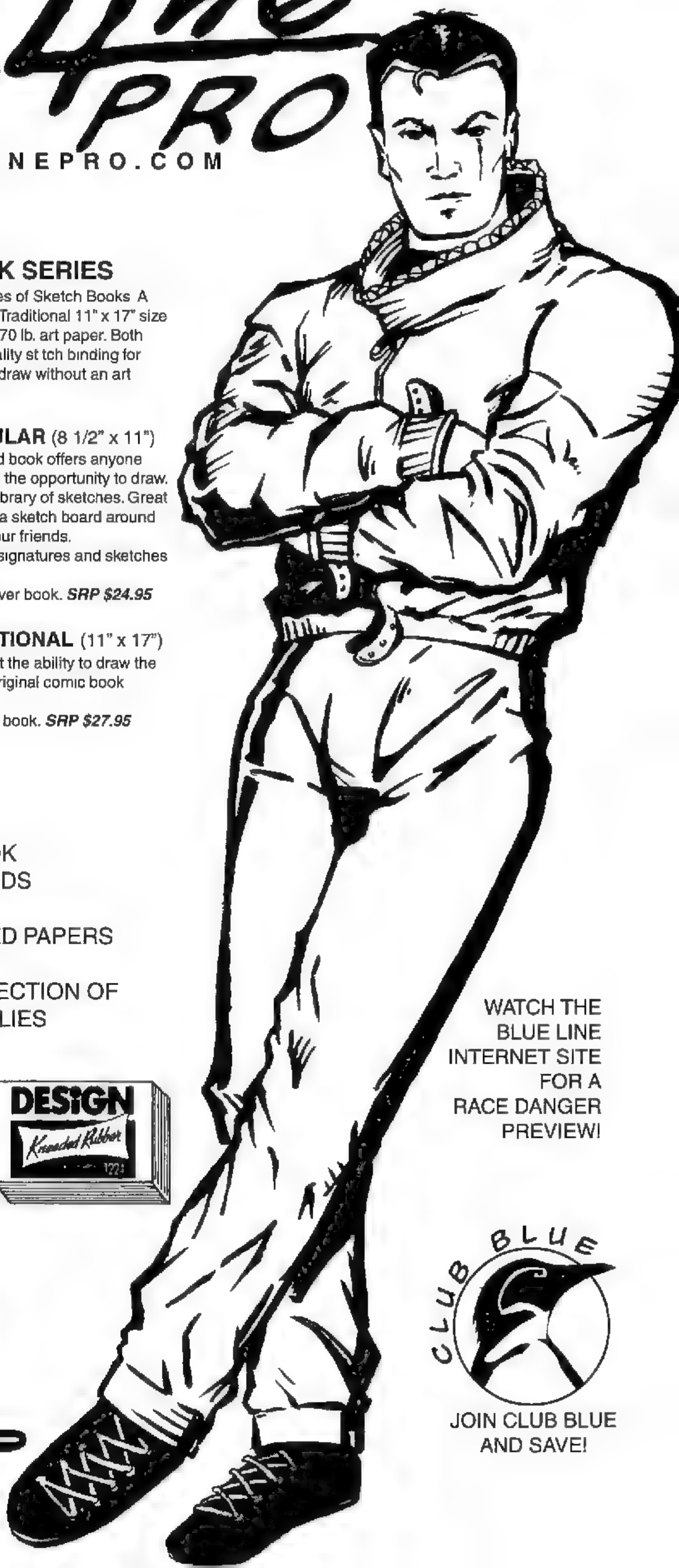
LARGE SELECTION OF  
ART SUPPLIES



WATCH THE  
BLUE LINE  
INTERNET SITE  
FOR A  
RACE DANGER  
PREVIEW!



JOIN CLUB BLUE  
AND SAVE!





## STRATHMORE COMIC BOOK BOARDS

### STRATHMORE

#### 300 Series Full Trim Format

PRO 300 Series Comic Book Boards is an economical heavyweight paper. Like the rest of the Blue Line products the Pro 300 Series is preprinted with a non-photo blue border that allows the artist to draw comics the actual size that professionals do.

**PRO 300 Series (SMOOTH)** surface is a 100lb. 100% acid free board. This Strathmore board is ideal for pen ink work and is also suited for pencil and marker.

**ITEM# BL1041 SRP \$17.00**

12 pages per pack

11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/ bagged

**PRO 300 Series (REGULAR)** toothy surface is a 100lb. 100% acid free board. This Strathmore board works well with pencils, charcoal and watercolor.

**ITEM# BL1042 SRP \$17.00**

12 pages per pack

11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/ bagged

### STRATHMORE

#### 400 Series Full Trim Format

400 Series already has a very serious history. Comic Book Boards 400 series is printed on the finest art paper available, **Strathmore**. Like the rest of the Blue Line products the 400 Series is preprinted with a non-photo blue border that allows the artist to draw comics the actual size that professionals draw.

**S400 Series (SMOOTH)** surface is a 100% acid free bristol. This Strathmore board is ideal for detailed ink work and is also suited for pencil and marker.

12 pages per pack

11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/ bagged.

**ITEM# BL1043 SMOOTH 2-PLY SRP \$19.00**

**ITEM# BL1045 SMOOTH 3-PLY SRP \$28.00**

**S400 Series (REGULAR)** toothy surface is a 100% acid free bristol. This Strathmore board works well with pencils, inks, charcoal and pastel.

12 pages per pack

11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/ bagged.

**ITEM# BL1044 REGULAR 2-PLY SRP \$19.00**

**ITEM# BL1046 REGULAR 3-PLY SRP \$28.00**

PLY.

Ply is the thickness of the paper. A 2 ply paper has two pieces of paper pressed together and a 3 ply has 3 pieces of paper pressed together which is thicker than 2 ply.

### STRATHMORE

#### 500 Series Full Trim Format

500 series comic book boards is the top of the line for art paper.

Strathmore 500 is 100% cotton fiber, Acid free and unsurpassed for fine pen and pencil work.

**500 Series (SMOOTH)** surface is a 100% cotton fiber acid free board. This Strathmore board is ideal for pen ink work and is also suited for pencil and marker.

12 pages per pack

11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/ bagged.

**ITEM# BL1047 SMOOTH 2-PLY SRP \$41.00**

**ITEM# BL1049 SMOOTH 3-PLY SRP \$57.75**

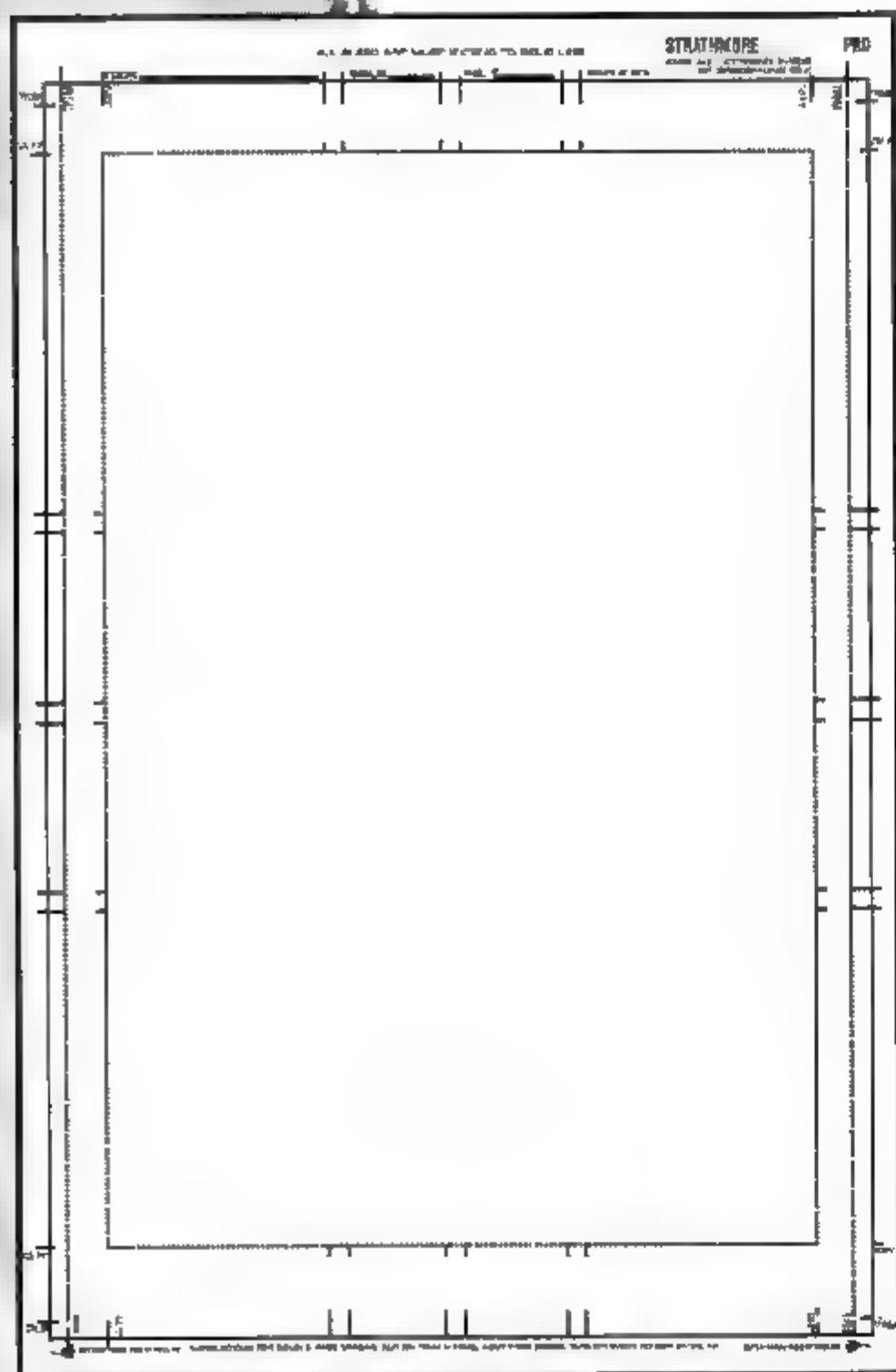
**500 Series (REGULAR)** toothy surface is a 100% cotton fiber acid free board. This Strathmore board works well with pencils, charcoal and watercolor.

12 pages per pack

11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/ bagged.

**ITEM# BL1048 REGULAR 2-PLY SRP \$41.00**

**ITEM# BL1050 REGULAR 3-PLY SRP \$57.75**





## COMIC BOOK BOARDS

## PRO COMIC BOOK BOARDS FULL TRIM FORMAT

Blue Line has taken the quality paper that they have used in the 'Pro' pages for years and printed a newly designed Full Trim border format in non-photo blue ink.

This offering the artist the quality of Pro pages with an advanced page border.

In addition, each pack also includes one page of Blue Line Comic Book Cover Sheets, specifically laid out with a larger image area for standard comic book cover designs.

Use pencil, ink (brush recommended), markers, wash, acrylics.

**ITEM# BL1038 SRP \$15.95**

24 pages per pack.

11" x 17" 3-ply brite art boards with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area and 1 Cover Sheet with 10 3/4" x 16" non-photo border printed/ bagged.

## PRO COMIC BOOK BOARDS TRADITIONAL FORMAT

Pro Comic Book Boards brite white surface offers a smooth surface to pencils and inking with a brush literally glides across the surface (quill pen not recommended). Pro has offered thousands of artist the opportunity to begin their careers on a pre-printed boards like the professional publisher uses.

Traditional Format has the original 10" x 15" image border with panel markers for a traditional page layout.

Page size is 11" x 17" with a non-photo blue image area of 10" x 15". In addition, each pack also includes one page of Blue Line Comic Book Cover Sheets, specifically laid out with a larger image area for standard comic book cover designs.

Use pencil, ink (brush recommended), markers, wash, acrylics.

**ITEM# BL1001 SRP \$15.95**

24 pages per pack.

11" x 17" 3-ply brite art boards with a 10" x 15" non-photo image printed and 1 Cover Sheet with 10 3/4" x 16" non-photo image printed/ bagged.



## COMIC BOOK BOARDS

(Traditional Format)

Comic Book Boards are specifically laid out with an image area for standard comic book designs. These boards like the other comic book boards offer an area to write the name of the book the artist is drawing, issue number, page number and date. This helps to keep track of your boards and where they belong. Double page spreads are a snap for an artist. Just take two comic book boards and then butt the sides together, apply tape down the back of those boards and then the artist is ready to illustrate a double-page drawing. Fast and easy with no cutting. They are 24 pages of Brite Art Index. Page size is 11" x 17" with a non-photo blue image area of 10" x 15".

Use pencil, ink (brush), marker, wash.

**ITEM# BL1003 SRP \$12.95**

24 pages per pack.

11" x 17" pages with a 10" x 15" non-photo image/ bagged

## COMIC BOOK COVER SHEETS

These Comic Book Cover Sheets, show a border for your drawing with pre-marked bleeds for trimming with an area for the possible placement for the book's logo and company information clearly marked. This helps to keep all of the important elements of the covers from being covered up when the book logo and company info are placed later. They are 12 pages of 2-ply premium Brite art index board that come bagged and feature non-photo blue ink. Page size is 11" x 17" with an image area of 10 3/4" x 16".

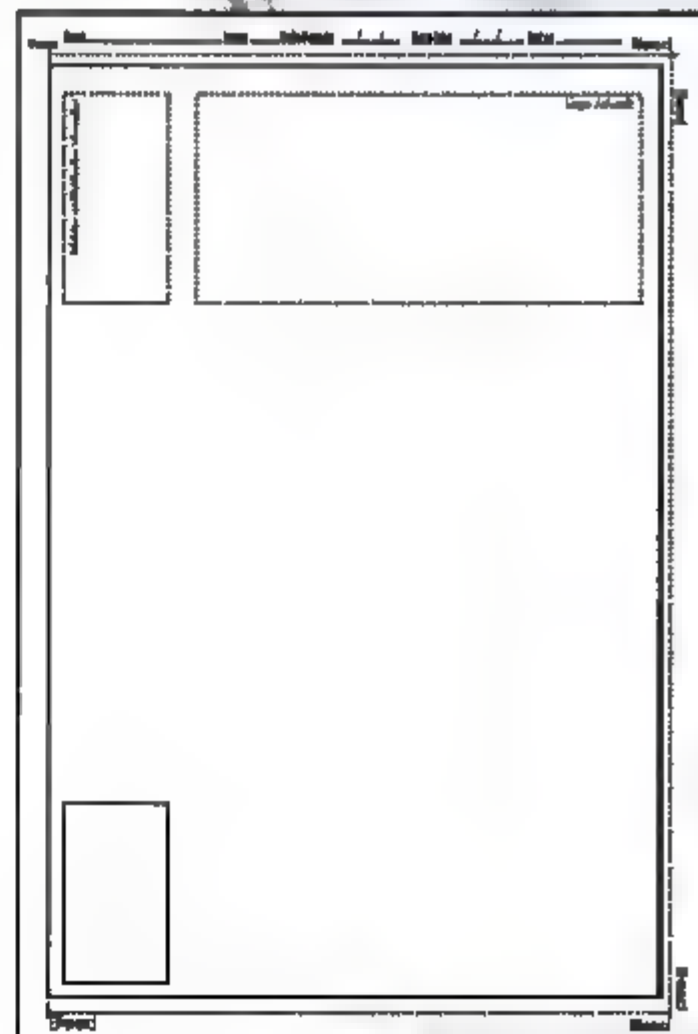
**ITEM# BL1007 SRP \$9.95**

12 pages per pack

11" x 17" art pages printed with a 10 3/4" x 16" non-photo blue border printed/ bagged.

Blue Line now offers comic artist an full trim comic book board to draw your comics. Just recently comic book publishers have been using full trim comic book boards to draw their comics.

Blue Line has designed a full trim page that fits most requirements for full bleed comics, but can also be used to draw traditional comic book page formats. Special dotted borders helps the artist to keep the important illustrations within an area to be sure it's not lost to trimming





## CUSTOMIZED ART PAPERS

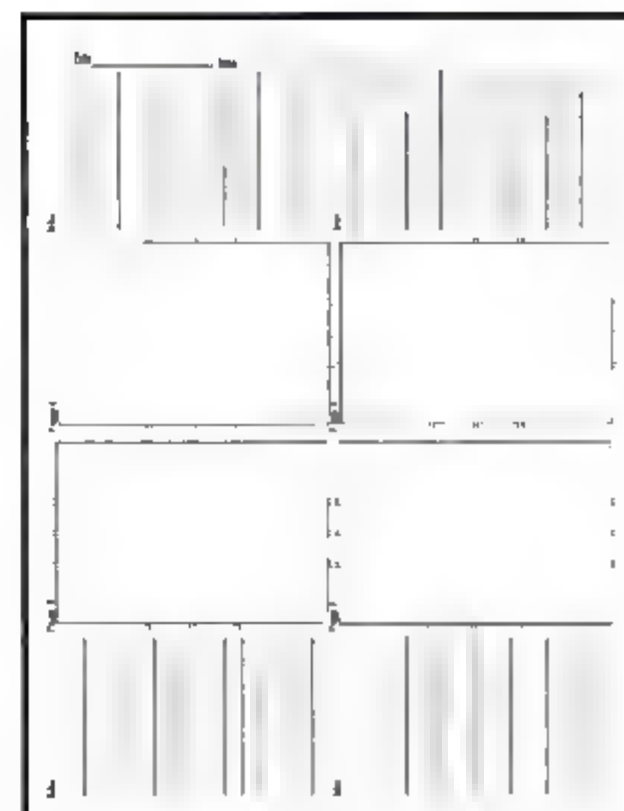
### LAYOUT PAGES

Comic Book Layout Pages uses premium bond paper and printed in non-photo blue, of course, features markings to layout four thumbnails per sheet to detail your comic book page ideas and room for notations and other information.

Used for story boarding your comic book story. A great tool for artists or writers to work out details for the story along with layouts of pages.

ITEM# BL1005 **SRP \$8.95**

30 8 1/2" x 11" pages printed in non-photo blue/ bagged.



### STORYBOARD TEMPLATES

Animators and Storyboard artist! Blue Line Storyboard Templates offers animators and writers a quick and easy way to show movement and sequences of a story or animation.

Storyboard Templates have three large panels with lines below each for detailed art and storytelling.

ITEM# BL1018 **SRP \$13.95**

100 sheets of 60 lb. 8 1/2" x 14" pages with 3 panels padded with colored cover.

### CREATE YOUR OWN COMIC BOOK!

Blue Line has developed a simple and inexpensive step by step to create your very first comic book, that's fun, easy and comprehensive. A box set of Blue Line products that aid a person in making their own comic! It includes 1 Character Template, 6 Concept Sketch Pages, 6 Comic Book Layout Pages, 24 Comic Book Pages, 1 Comic Book Cover Sheet and a 24 page instructional comic book.

ITEM# BL1002 **SRP \$21.95**

Box Set. 37 art pages / 24 page b&w instructional comic book / full color die cut box / shrink wrapped.



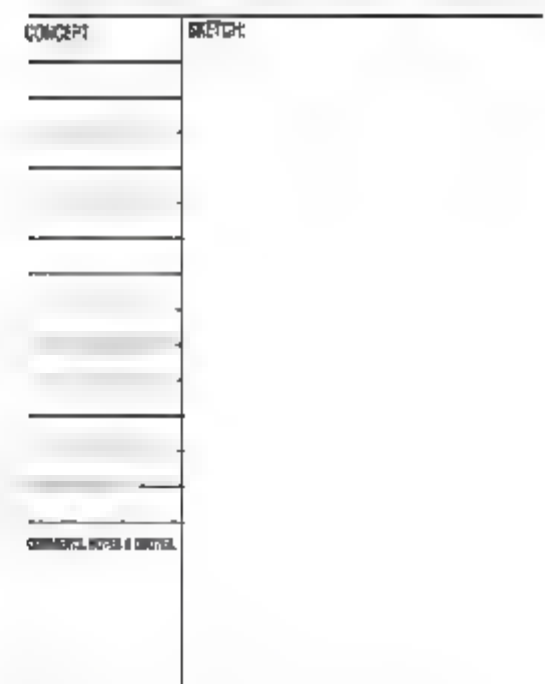
### CONCEPT SKETCH PAGES

Record and organize your creative ideas on a convenient, quality art board. Concept Sketch Pages are made from premium index board featuring non-photo blue ink so that the artist can ink his illustrations on a non-repro surface. Concept Sketch Pages offer an image area for an illustrator to draw a character scene or anything. And, it also gives room for written information to be included with the artwork. This is handy when a character is designed for a comic book and you want to include his bio, powers, etc., or a Role Playing character you're playing. These pages can easily be hole punched and inserted into a binder. A character template is even included for quick and easy character creations!

ITEM# BL1004 **SRP \$8.95**

25 art pages printed in non-photo blue/ bagged.

### CONCEPT SKETCH PAGES

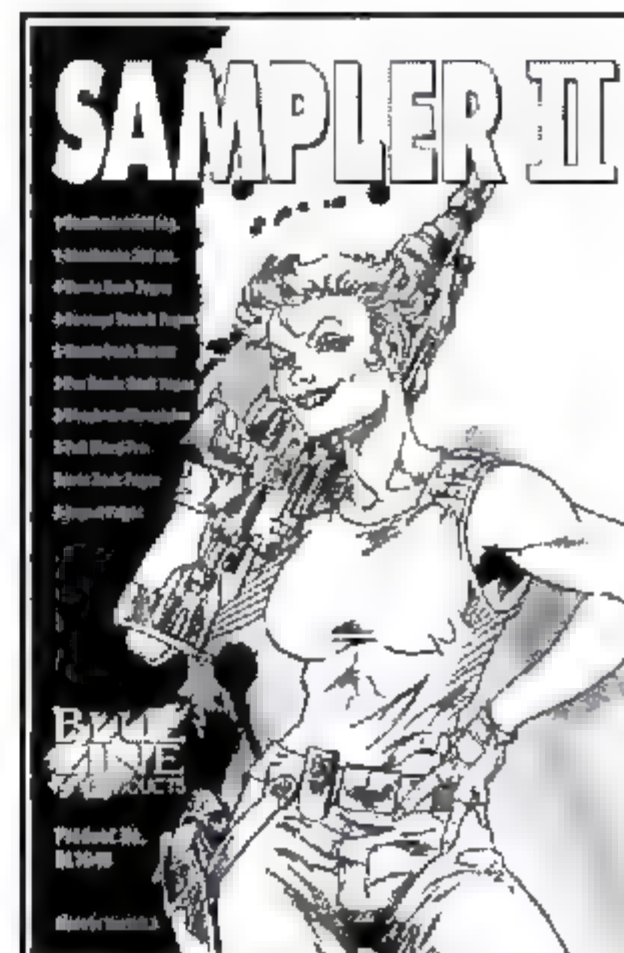


### BLUE LINE SAMPLER II

If you haven't tried Blue Line products, here's your chance! The Blue Line Sampler includes 4-Comic Book Pages, 4-Concept Sketch Pages, 3-Comic Book Cover Sheets, 3- Layout Pages, 3-Pro Comic Book Pages, 3-Storyboard Templates, 3-Full Bleed Pro C.B. Pages, 1-Strathmore 300 smooth, 1- Strathmore 300 regular. All in non-photo blue, of course! That's 25 pages of five different Blue Line products! Check out all Blue Line and Blue Line Pro products in one fell swoop!

ITEM# BL1040 **SRP \$13.95**

25 pages of 8 different Blue Line products. 4-Comic Book Pages, 4-Concept Sketch Pages, 3-Comic Book Cover Sheets, 3- Layout Pages, 3-Pro Comic Book Pages, 3-Storyboard Templates, 3-Full Bleed Pro C.B. Pages, 1-Strathmore 300 smooth, 1- Strathmore 300 regular. 25 pages per pack.



### PENCILER ART KIT

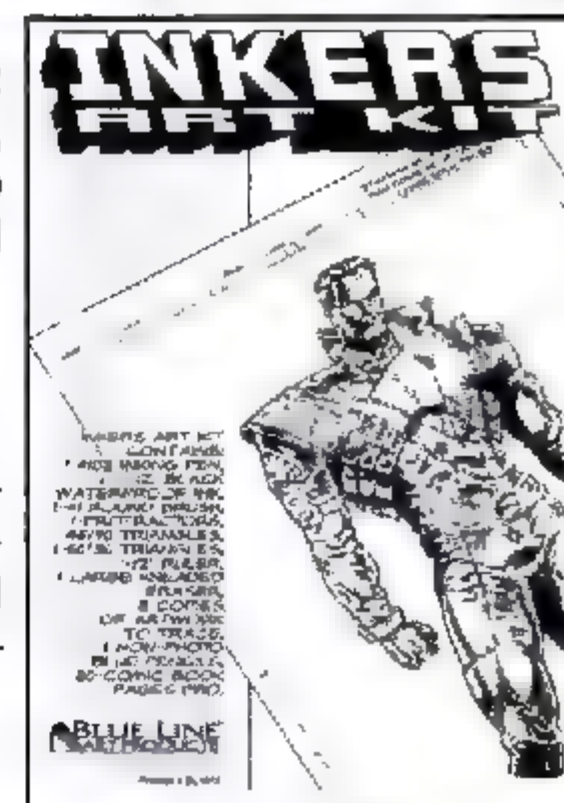
The Penciler art kit includes the following tools, papers and supplies: 1-6" Ruler, 2-Protractor, 2-45/90 Triangle, 2-60/30 Triangle, 1-Compass, 1-Pencil Sharpener, 1-Eraser, 1-Large Kneaded Eraser, 3-Non Photo Blue Pencils, 1-12" Ruler, 20-Regular Comic Book Pages with pre printed borders. Travel box.

ITEM# BL1013 **SRP \$29.95**

### INKER ART KIT

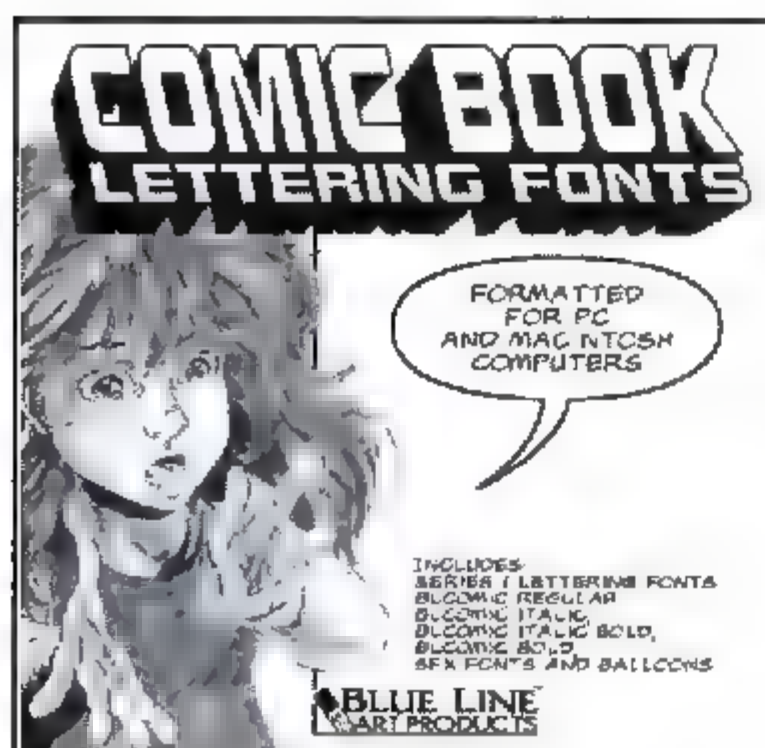
The Inker Art Kits includes the following tools, papers and supplies; 1-#102 Inking Pen, 1-1 oz. Black Waterproof Ink, 1-#2 Round Brush, 1-Protractor, 1-45/90 Triangle, 1-60/30 Triangle, 1-12" Ruler, 1-Kneaded Eraser, 2 copies of artwork to light table, 20 Pro Comic Book Pages. 1-Non Photo Blue Pencil. Travel box.

ITEM# BL1012 **SRP \$34.95**





## SKETCH PAD. FONTS. WORK BOOK SERIES



## BLUE LINE COMIC BOOK LETTERING FONT SERIES 1

Blue Line now offers creators an inexpensive lettering font.

BLCOMIC font is formatted for Macintosh and PC Compatibles in a TrueType format. BLSFX is a special effects font with pre-created sound effects that are ready for you to drop into place.

Also included is user configurable word balloons in eps format.

ITEM# BL1019 SRP \$19.95

Includes: BLCOMIC font (Regular, Bold, Italic, Italic Bold). BLSFX font and configurable word balloons.

3 1/2 disk PC and Mac. format.

BLCOMIC FONT: ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1234567890

BLSFX FONT:

APPOH! BIZAM CRASH BOOM YAH! FAWOOSH

GLUB HAM JINGLE MUNCH

OW FOW PO RUMBLE SPLASH TP UGH VA-ROOOM

WHAM YAWN ZAP

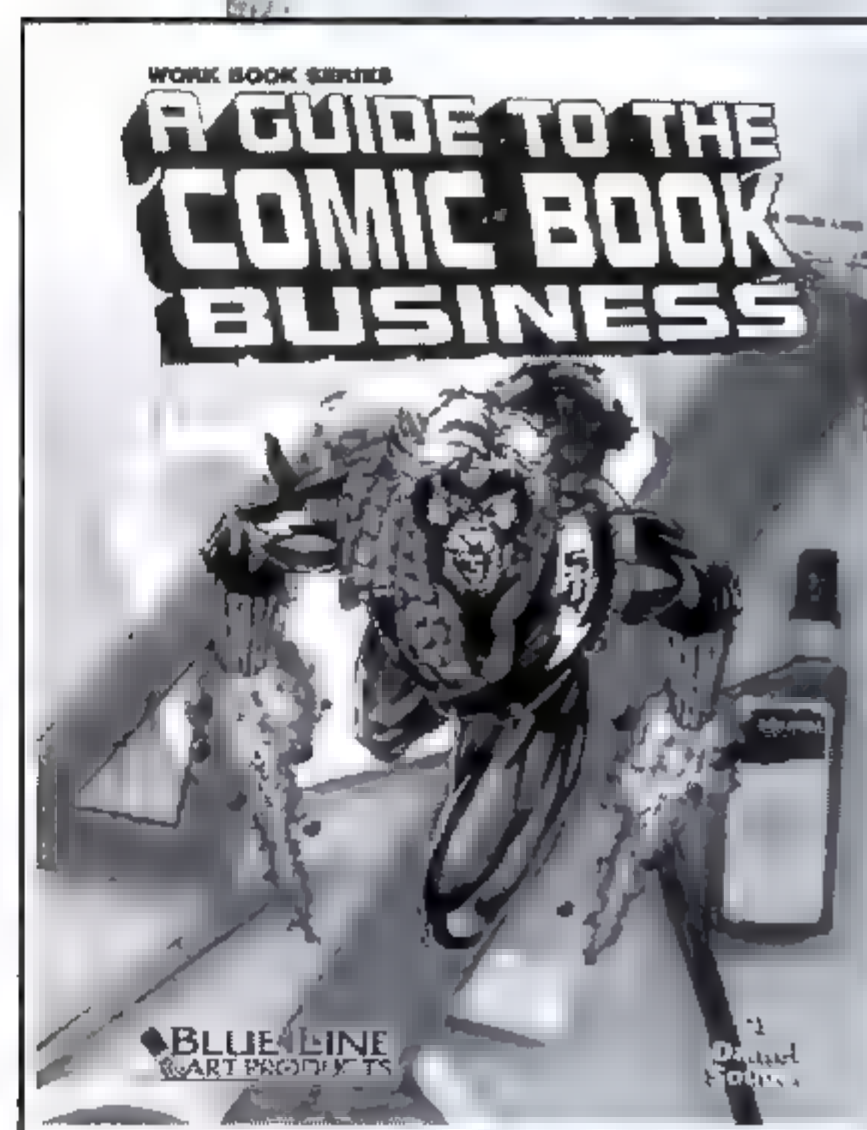
## BLUE LINE: A GUIDE TO THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS

Every fan who reads comics has at one time or another felt the urge to join in on the fun, to take a more active role, to become a player instead of a spectator. In short, to create. You have the desire, now you need a plan.

That's where Blue Line's A Guide To The Comic Book Business comes in. It covers all of the basics for starting and maintaining a successful career in the comic book industry. It doesn't matter if your skills lie in penciling or management, this book tells you what to do to turn your hobby into a paid profession.

The first chapter gets you up-to-date on how the industry is set up. It gives you the basic information necessary to be a knowledgeable participant in the comics field. Now that you're seated, we serve the appetizers - how to go about creating your own comics. After you've digested this important info, it's time for the main course. You'll discover proven methods for making yourself an outstanding candidate. Then, we take a look at other jobs in the industry outside of the creative aspect for all of you wannabe corporate types. For a side dish, chapter five deals with that small but growing niche of the industry - the small press and self-publisher. Finally, dessert. We clue you in on effective ways to advertise and promote your work so that you can actually make money off of your talents.

So, for everyone who's ever dreamed of being on the other side of the table at a comic convention, doodled more in class notebooks than actually taking notes, this book is for you.



Forward by Beau Smith Executive Director of Publishing for McFarlane Productions

Written by Daniel Souder. Edited by Bob Hickey

ITEM# BL1039 SRP \$17.95

90 pages / b&w with full color cover. Spiral bound.

## POCKET SKETCH PAD

50 pages of heavy illustration board to carry around in your pocket to have ready when your hit with a revolutionary vision. Great for quick sketches and designs. Featuring Blue Line's quality illustration paper. Great for pencilling, inking and washes.

50 pages / 5" x 9 1/2" / padded / two-color cover

Item # BL1051 SRP \$5.95





## ART SUPPLIES

### INK

- AR-4415 Black Ink (Higgins) 1oz. \$3.00
- AR-EF44011 Black Magic Ink (Higgins) 1oz. \$3.50
- AR-PE211862 Black India Ink (Pelikan) 1oz. \$4.75
- AR-PE211169 Black India Ink (Pelikan) 8oz. \$18.75
- AR-PE221374 Black Ink Pelikan "T" 1oz. \$6.00

### WHITE OUT

- AR-FW-011 FW Acrylic Artist Ink \$5.00

### BRUSHES

- AR-5007001 Winsor Newton Series 7 Size #1 \$18.95
- AR-5007002 Winsor Newton Series 7 Size #2 \$22.95
- AR-NB-38-0 Round Brush Size #0 \$3.00
- AR-NB-38-1 Round Brush Size #1 \$3.25
- AR-NB-38-2 Round Brush Size #2 \$3.95
- AR-056009016 Round Brush #3 \$3.95

### PENCILS & QUILL PENS

- AR-761-5 Non-photo Blue Pencil \$.60
- AR-H9432 Quill Inking Pen #102 (Tip & Holder) \$2.25
- AR-H9402 12 Crow Quill #102 Tips (Inking Pen Nibs) \$13.95

### KOH-I-NOOR RAPIDOGRAPH PENS

- AR-3165-06/0 Tech Pen Size 6x0 (.13mm) \$27.00
- AR-3165-04/0 Tech Pen Size 4x0 (.18mm) \$27.00
- AR-3165-03/0 Tech Pen Size 3x0 (.25mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-02/0 Tech Pen Size 2x0 (.3mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-01/0 Tech Pen Size 1/0 (.35mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-01 Tech Pen Size #1 (.5mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-02 Tech Pen Size #2 (.6mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-03 Tech Pen Size #3 (.8mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-04 Tech Pen Size #4 (1mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-06 Tech Pen Size #6 (1.4mm) \$22.00
- AR-3165-07 Tech Pen Size #7 (2mm) \$22.00

### KOH-I-NOOR RAPIDGRAPH INK

- AR-3084-FI Koh-I-Noor Ink \$3.95

### T-SQUARES

- AR-HX02 Plastic 12" \$3.95
- AR-NBA18 Plastic 18" \$7.95
- AR-NBA24 Plastic 24" \$10.95
- AR-FR63-112 Aluminum 12" \$10.95
- AR-FR63-118 Aluminum 18" \$12.95
- AR-FR63-124 Aluminum 24" \$13.95

### RULERS

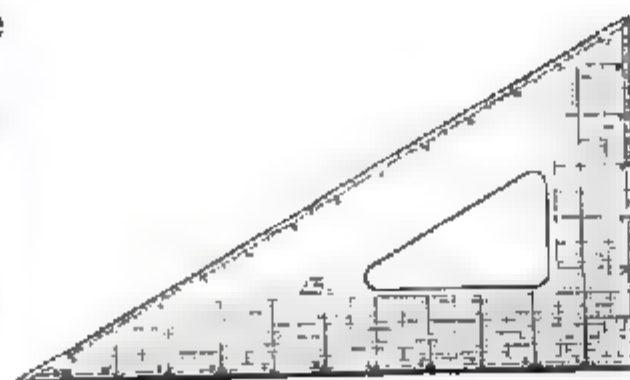
- AR-200-12 Steel Ruler 12 inch Cork Backing \$5.95
- AR-200-18 Steel Ruler 18 inch Cork Backing \$6.95
- AR-C36 Ruler 12" (plastic ruler) \$1.25
- AR-18 Ruler 6" (plastic ruler) \$.50

### TRIANGLES 30" x 60"W/ Inking Edge

- AR-1204-60 Triangle 30"x60" 4 inch \$3.50
- AR-1206-60 Triangle 30"x60" 6 inch \$4.50
- AR-1208-60 Triangle 30"x60" 8 inch \$5.50
- AR-1210-60 Triangle 30"x60" 10 inch \$6.50
- AR-1212-60 Triangle 30" 60" 12 inch \$8.50

### TRIANGLES 45" X 90"W/ Inking Edge

- AR-1204-45 Triangle 45"x90" 4 inch \$4.50
- AR-1206-45 Triangle 45"x90" 6 inch \$5.50
- AR-1208-45 Triangle 45"x90" 8 inch \$7.50
- AR-1210-45 Triangle 45"x90" 10 inch \$9.50
- AR-1212-45 Triangle 45"x90" 12 inch \$11.50

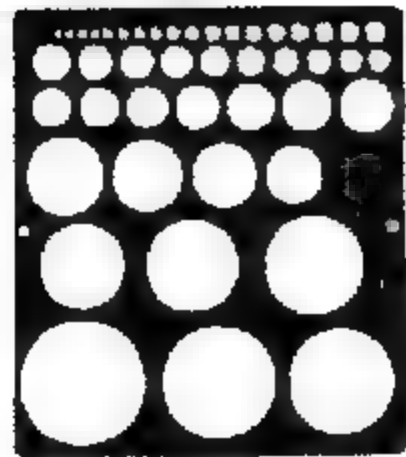


### COMPASS SET

- AR-HX18807 8-piece Geometry Set \$4.95
- AR-723405 8-Piece Geometry Set (brass compass) \$7.95

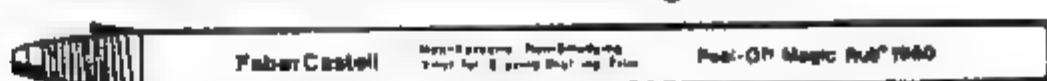
### CIRCLE TEMPLATES / FRENCH CURVES

- AR-13001 Large Circles \$7.95
- AR-13011 Extra Large Circles \$6.95
- AR-9000 French Curves (Inking Edge) Set \$6.95
- AR-PK12691 Ellipse Temps. \$12.00

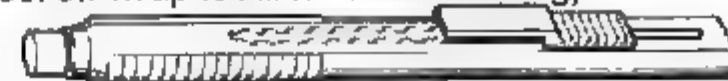


### ERASERS

- AR-1224 Kneaded Rubber Eraser Large \$1.15



- AR-400 Eraser Pencils \$1.15 (Peel off wrap ideal for detail erasing)



- AR-ZE-21C Pentel Clic Eraser/Holder \$1.95 (retract as needed)

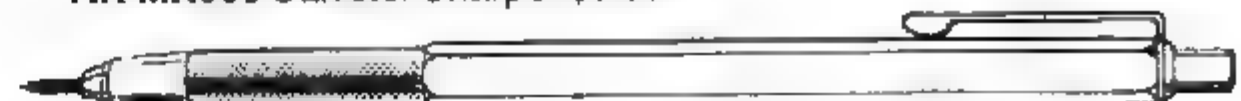
- AR-ZER-2 2 Pentel Refill Erasers \$1.75

- AR-FT-5370 Erasing Shield \$1.10



### PENCIL SHARPNER

- AR-MR908 Canister Sharpener \$3.95

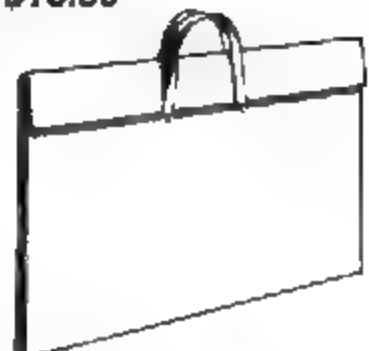


### MECHANICAL PENCIL

- AR-BP10C Pentel Mech. Pencil 2 MM. \$6.95
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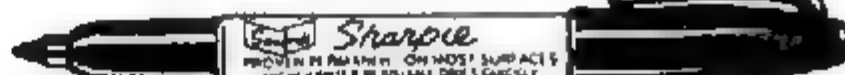
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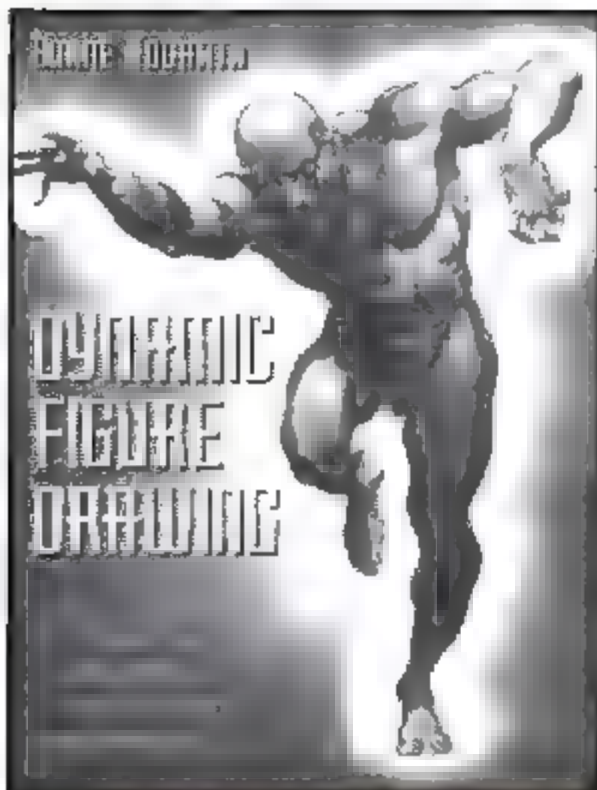


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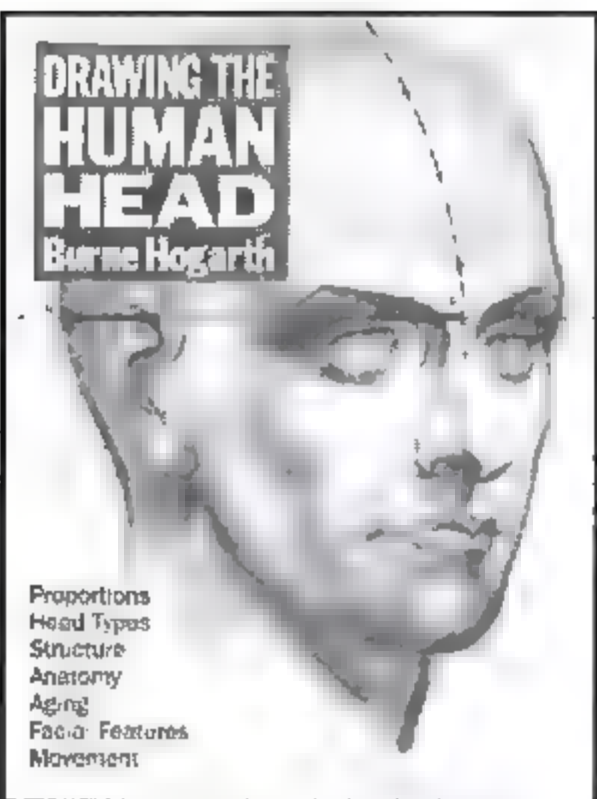
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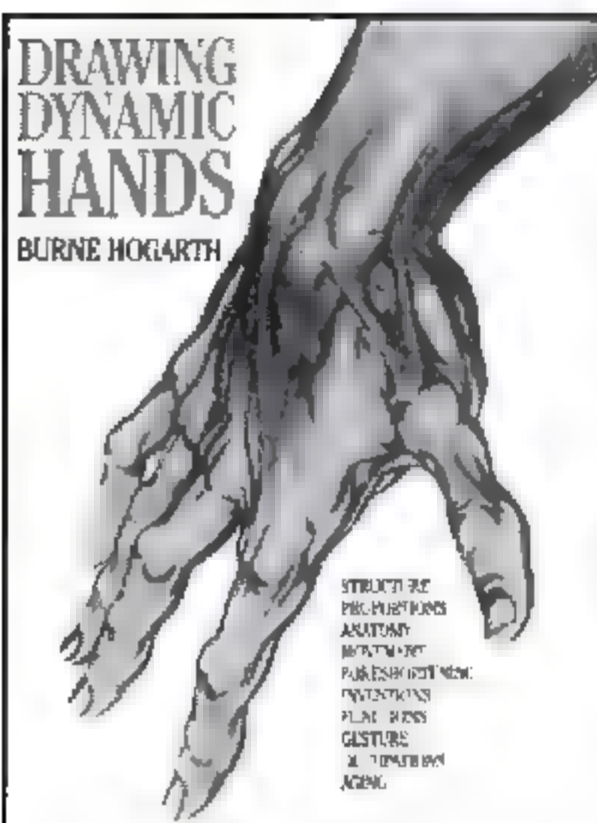
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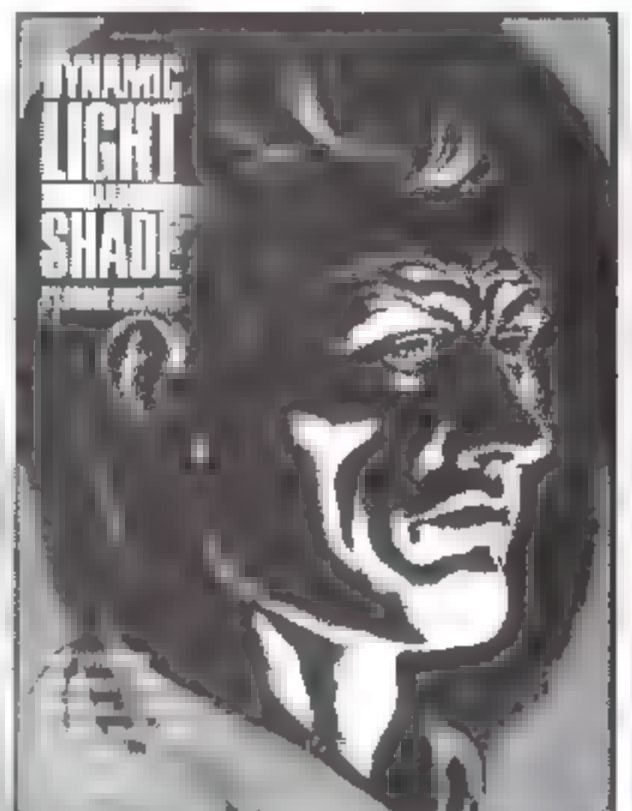
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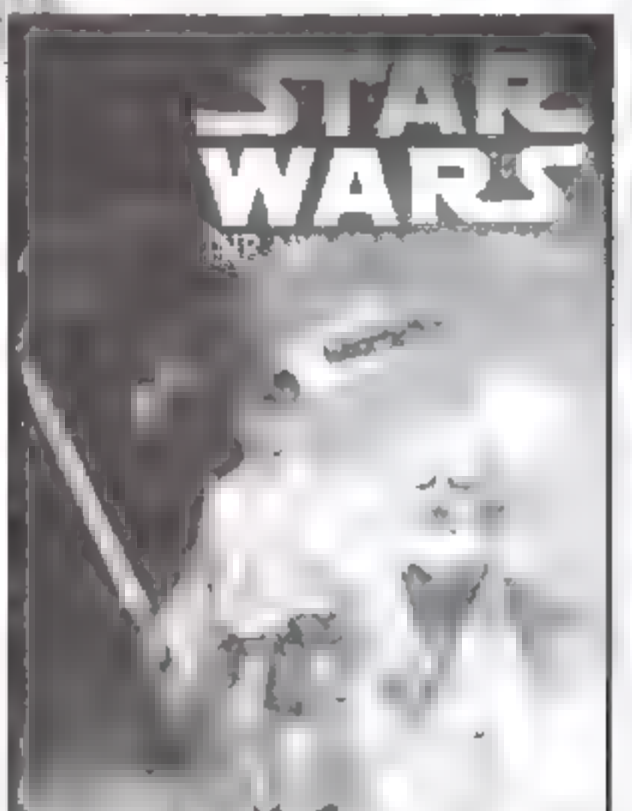
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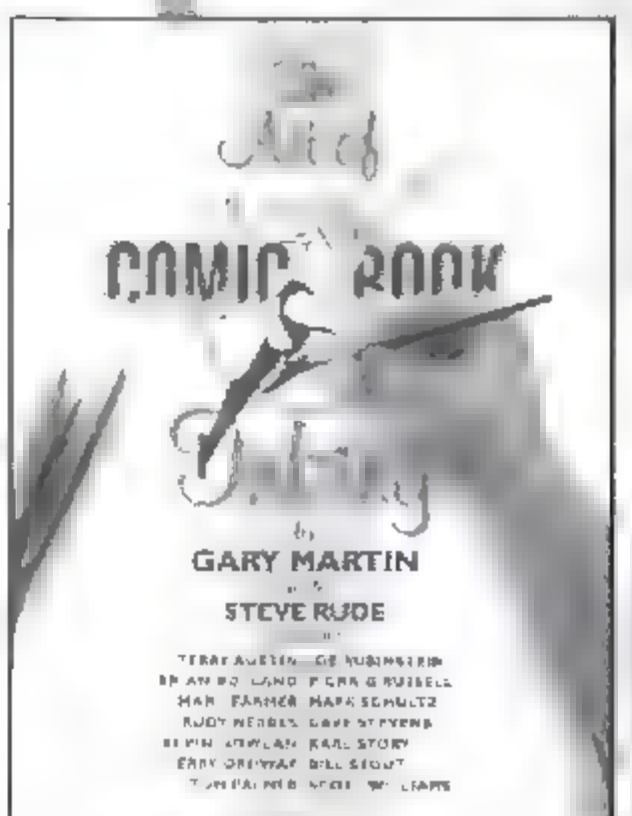
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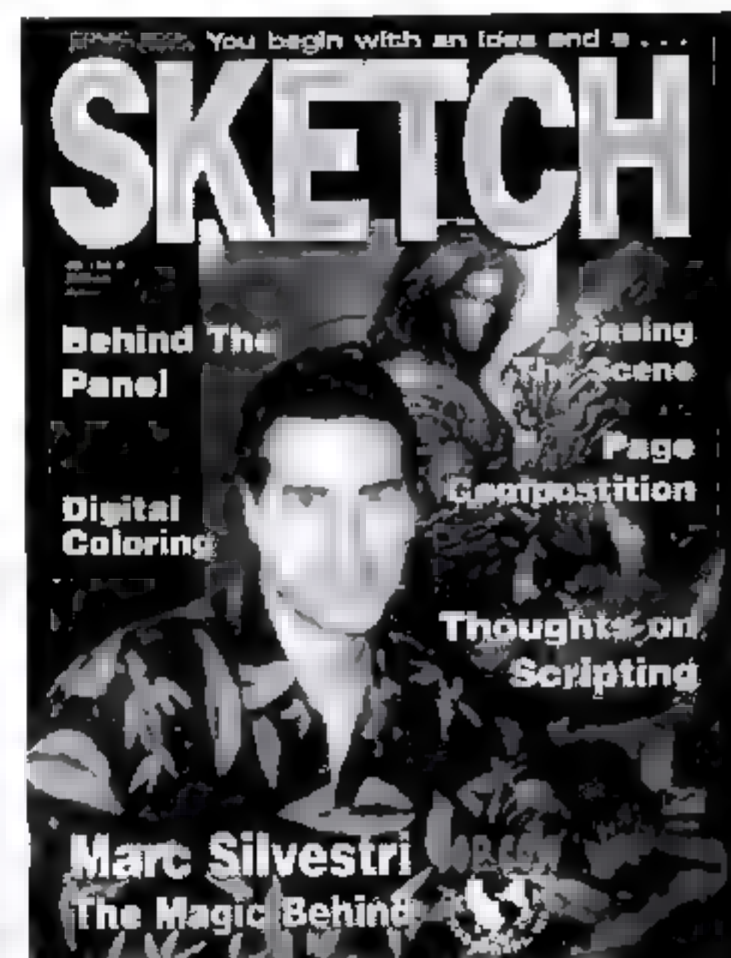






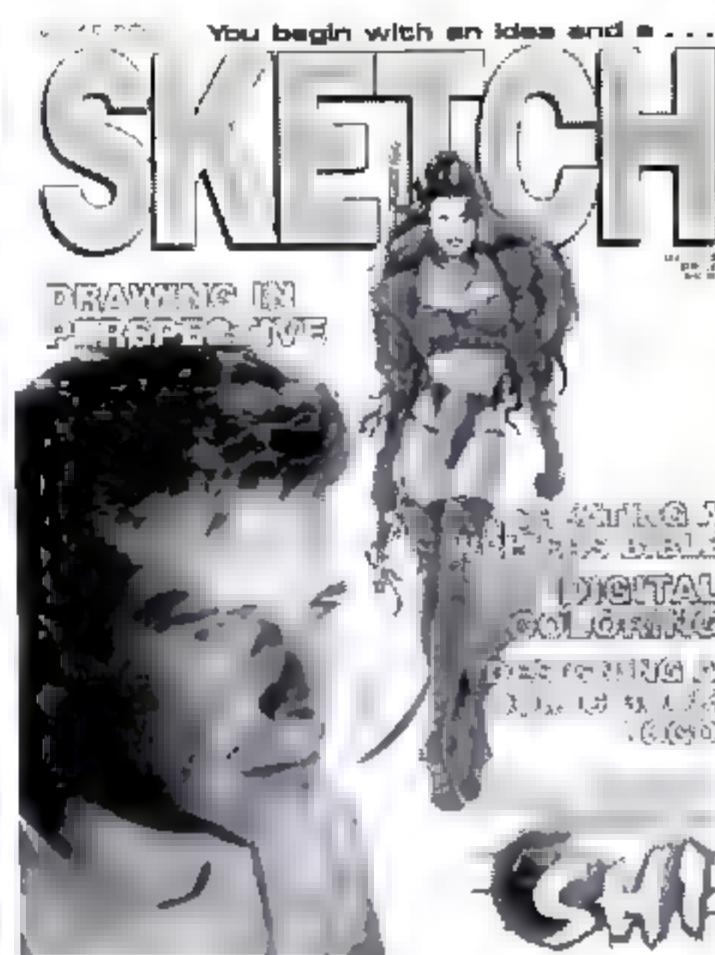
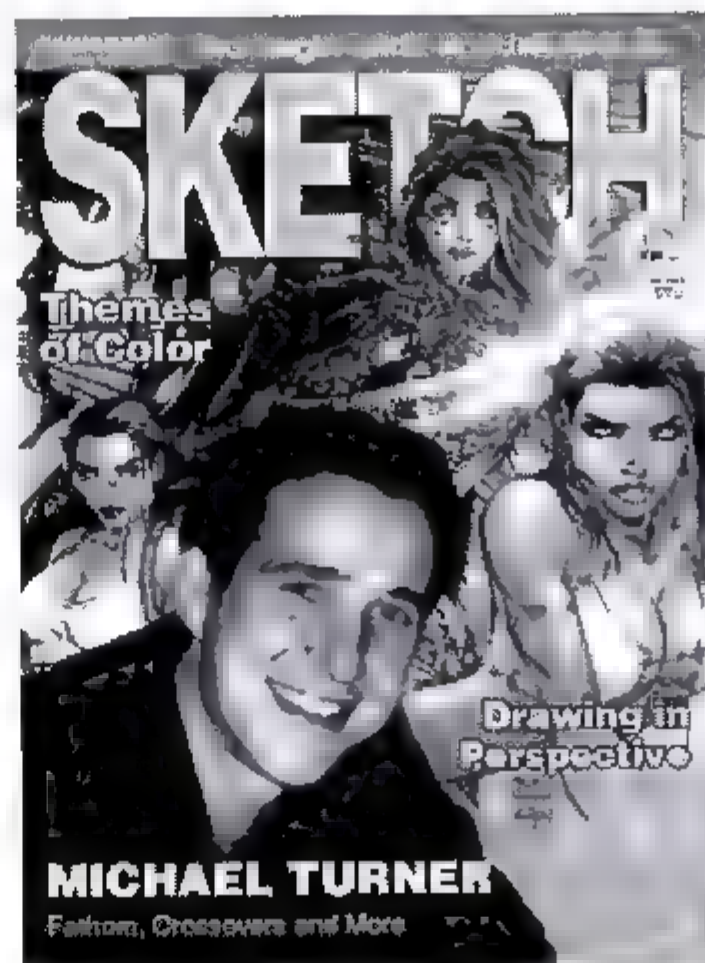
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St. Paul's Church Auditorium, New York, NY. Dates include September 15-16 and the National Show at the Metropolitan in Manhattan November 10-12. Contact: Big Apple Conventions Inc., 7405 Metropolitan Ave., Middle Village, NY 11379, Ph. (718) 326-2713.

### Big Easy Comic-Con

May 25-27, 2001 New Orleans, LA. Organized by Contact: R.A.P. Productions PO Box 3831, Mansfield, OH 44907-1427, Roger Price, Ph. (419) 526-1427, Fax. (603) 250-9252, Email: BIGEASYCON@WFCOMICS.COM Website: WWW.BIGEASYCON.COM.

### The Big One

August 13, 2000 Akron, OH Holiday Inn-Akron South, 1-77 at exit 120 (Arlington Rd.) email JeffHarpro@aol.com for more information.

### Canadian National Comic Book Expo

August 25-27, 2000, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre Contact: Aman Gupta 4 Variety Rd., Toronto, Ontario M6S 4N4 CANADA. Ph. (416) 761-1760, E-mail AGUPTA@HOBBYSTAR.COM, Website: WWW.HOBBYSTAR.COM/COMICEXPO

### Cleveland Comic Con

September 24, 2000 Cleveland, OH (Eastside-Wickliffe) Knights Party Center (K OF C Hall) 29101 Euclid Ave (1/2 mi. east of I-90 Exit 186) email JeffHarpro@aol.com for more information.

September 9, 2000 Memphis TN Ramada Inn 1471 East Brooks Rd. Exit 5A off I-55 Brooks Road Admission \$3. 10am-5pm. Contact kevf@netdoor.com for more information.

### San Diego Comic Con International

July 22-23, 2000 at the San Diego Convention Center, San Diego CA. Contact Fae Desmond Comic-Con International P.O. Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458. Ph. (619) 544-9555 Fax. (619) 544-0743, E-mail: CCIWEB@AOL.COM, Website: WWW.COMIC-CON.ORG

### Dragon Con

Friday August 31<sup>st</sup> through Monday September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2001 at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta and Atlanta Marriott Marquis, GA. Contact Ed Krammer, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362-0696, Ph. (770) 925-0115, Fax. (770) 623-6321, E-mail: EDKRAMER@AOL.COM, Website: WWW.DRAGONCON.ORG

### Heroes Convention

June 16-18, 2000 at the Charlotte Convention Center, Contact Shelton Drum. Heroes Convention 2000, P.O. Box 9181, Charlotte, NC 28299, Ph. (704) 375-7463, Fax. (704) 375-7464, Website: WWW.HEROESONLINE.COM

### Los Angeles Comic Book & Science Fiction Convention

Sept 17<sup>th</sup>, Shrine Auditorium Expo Center, 700 West 32<sup>nd</sup>. Contact Bruce Schwartz at 818-954-8432 or check their web site www.comicbookscifi.com

### Mega Con

March 2-4, 2001 at Orlando FL. Contact Beth Wildera, Mega Con, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677, Ph. (813) 891-1702, Fax. (813) 891-0542, E-mail: megacon2000@megaconvention.com, Website: www.megaconvention.com.

### Mid-Ohio-Con,

November 25-26 2000 at Adam's Mark Hotel Columbus OH. Contact Roger Price, R.A.P. Productions, P.O. Box 3831, Mansfield, OH 44907-3831, Ph. (419) 526-1427, Fax. (603) 250-9252, E-mail: MIDOH OCON@WFCOMICS.COM, Website: WWW.MIDOHIOCON.COM

### Minnesota Comic Book Convention

MCBA Fallcon Sept. 16-17, 2000. In Bloomington, Minn. Contact Nick or Brian, 5013 Grafton Ave. N., Oakdale, MN 55128, Ph. (612) 788-8191, Fax. (651) 228-3013, E-mail: MNCBA@AOL.COM.

### Motor City Conventions, Inc

Chicago Comicfest November 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, 2000 at Ramada Plaza Hotel O'Hara, IL. Motor City Comic Con May 19-21 at Novi Expo Center, Novi, MI Contact Gary Bishop 19785 W. 12 Mile Rd., Suite 231, Southfield, MI 48076, Ph. (248) 426-8059, Fax. (248) 426-8064. Website: www.motorcityconventions.com.

Motor City Comic Con October 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2000 Novi Expo Center 43700 Expo Ctr Dr 1-96 Exit 182 Novi, Michigan contact 248-426-8059 or check out the website at www.motorcityconventions.com.

### Youngstown-Warren Comic Con

September 10 Youngstown, OH Holiday Inn-Metroplex, I-80 & Rt. 193 (Exit 229) Belmont Ave email JeffHarpro@aol.com for more information.

### Wizard World Chicago 2000

August 4, 5-6 at the Rosemont Expo Center in suburban Chicago. Contact: Brenda Cook 151 Wers Avenue, Congers, NY 10920, ph. (914) 268-8068, fax (914) 268-8069 Website: www.wizardworld.com

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## DESIGNING OUTSIDE THE PANEL: PAGE AND PANEL COMPOSITION

by Paul Sizer

My influences in comic and cartoon art are very scattered and tend to become a kind of weird amalgamation that sometimes makes

sense. I

count

Charles

Schulz as

strong an

influence in

how I

approach

comics as I

do artists like

Geof Darrow

and Jack

Kirby. The

common

denominator

inherent to all

these people

is that they are masters of organizing the action and sequencing of a page, along with many other talented artists. Since our medium is referred to as "sequential art", it only makes sense to familiarize oneself with how others accomplish their version of sequencing.

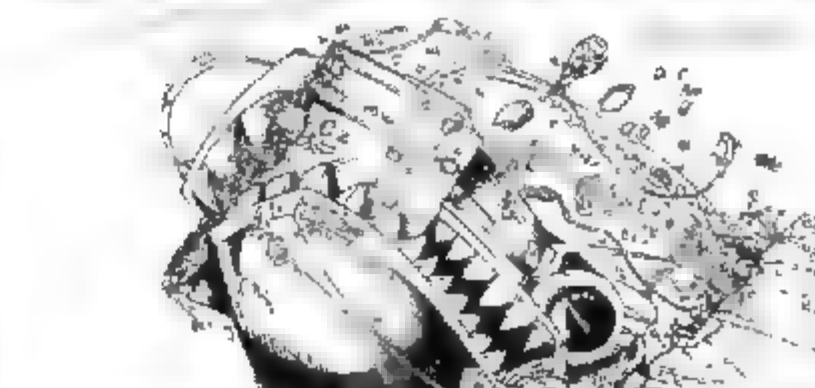
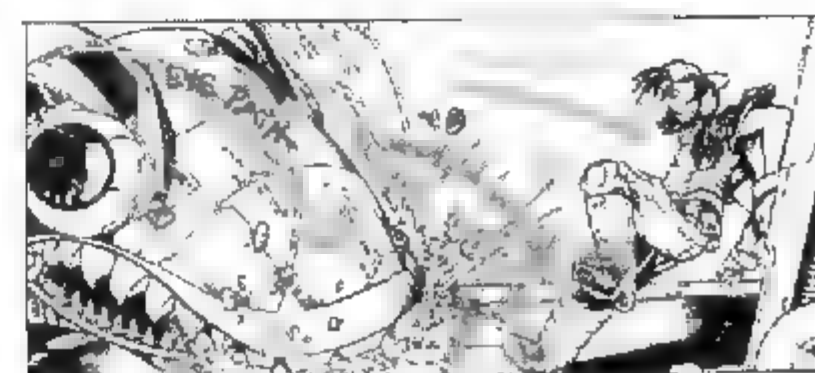
For me, I draw pretty heavily upon my design training to help me make decisions about how the eye travels through the sequence of information I want to get across to the reader. People like Will Eisner made leaps and bounds in the medium by

breaking the borders of a too rigid grid to allow the eye to flow more organically through his pages. I tend to balance what Eisner perfected with a typographic grid approach. Sounds like I know what I'm talking about, doesn't it? Well, since this is a comic medium, why don't I show you what I'm talking about, instead of using \$10 words to describe it. The following examples are unlettered pages from an upcoming issue of *LITTLE WHITE MOUSE* that show different ways I arrange pages and how I visually manage the area of a page or a panel:



EXAMPLE #1. For this page, I wanted to establish the feeling of Loo (the young girl heroine of my story) descending into a very deep mining

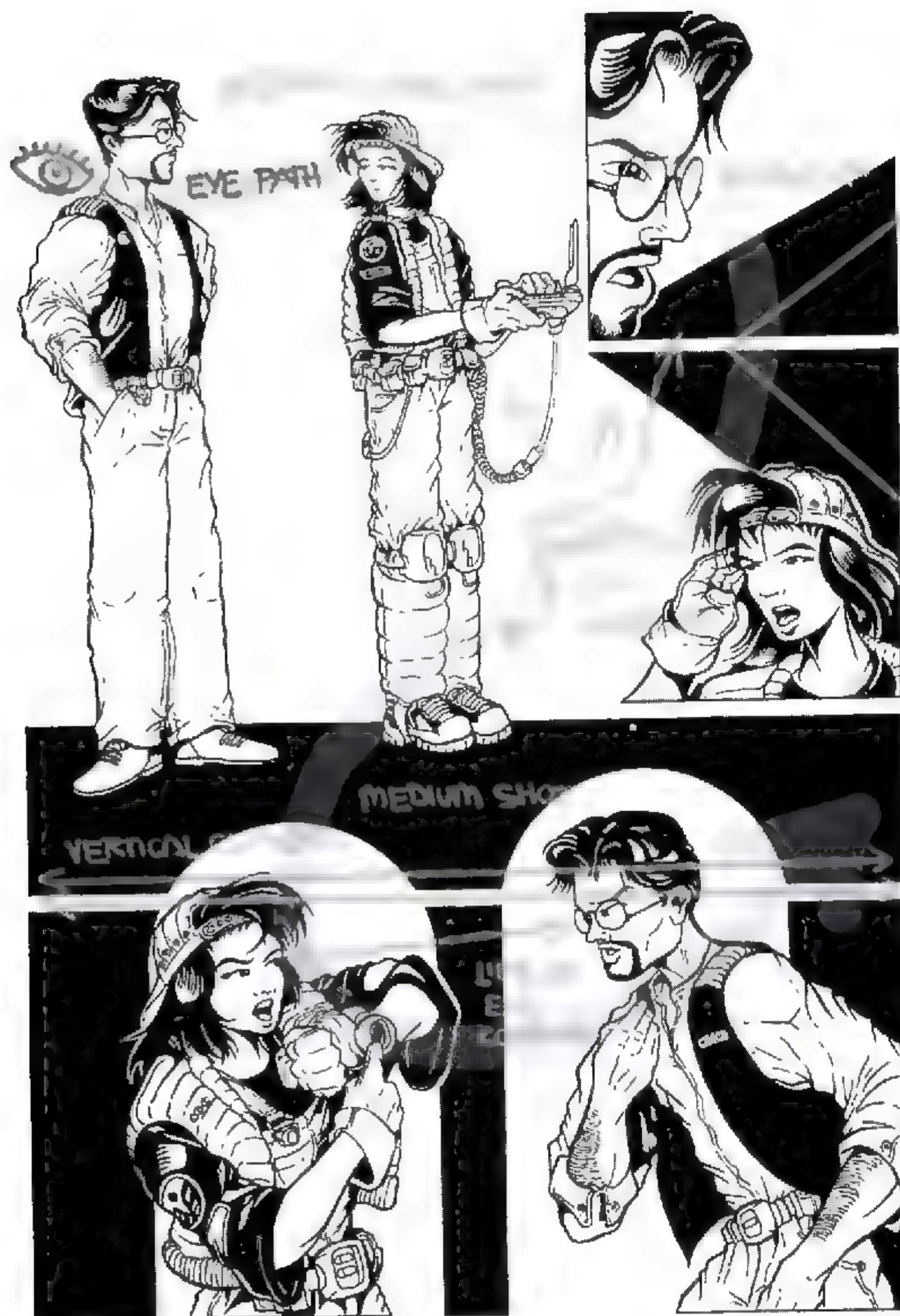
shaft, so I made the establishing shot panel a tall, vertical panel so I could maximize the up and down feel of the long lines and so the negative space areas would be tall and black. I included the streams of falling water to give me more vertical lines that further emphasize the depth of the panel. In the upper right panel, notice that the negative black shape behind Loo kind of mirrors the angle of the crane arm in the tall panel. Consequently, look at how the angle of the shadow areas in the bottom right panel are the mirror opposite of those above. This helps bounce the eye in a circular way through the page, without letting the path of sequence go flying off into space.



EXAMPLE #2. On this page, all the action is very broad and left and right, so the horizontal panels allow me to compose and orient the action in a very cinematic, widescreen kind of way. Notice that the middle panel is what I call an open panel. I tend to include these open panels to visually break up an area of a page that might become too similar and repetitive, especially in a case like this where

**Will Eisner made leaps and bounds in the medium by breaking the borders of a too rigid grid to allow the eye to flow more organically through his pages.**





the size of the three panels is nearly identical. Notice again how movements between panels mirror and are complementary to one another, like the angles of the cyberfish in the top and middle panel.

**EXAMPLE #3.** In pages like this one, where the main action is two people talking, I like to mix up the shots a lot, to move the camera (the viewer's eye) around, so that you don't get a static, boring series of talking heads. Since I know that there will be a lot of word balloons and text for this page, I intentionally make the

backgrounds of the individual panels simple shapes and forms that move the eye without having too much visual drag. Again, check out the mirroring of the background shapes between the two panels in the upper right hand corner. If I put dense, machine filled backgrounds in each panel, the combination of all the elements plus the word balloons would create a soupy, visually cluttered mess. To open the space of the page up, I again start with open panels to give the visual path a little more organic flow rather than constantly crashing into panel

borders. I also included a vertical element in the background of the bottom panel that emphasizes the line of vision and eye contact between Loo and Pascal.

Once again, keeping things simple always seems to solve visual problems for me. Panels on a page can each have their own dynamic, but ultimately, they are seen as a page, so the gestalt of the entire page is always very important.

Also, don't be afraid of open space in your panels. I find it absolutely necessary to give breathing space to each page. Otherwise, your panels and pages will become clogged up and impossible to navigate.

For really good examples of using space in panels, check out well done manga comics like "Steam Detectives", "Video Girl AI" and "Akira" to see how masterfully Japanese comics use the negative space of panels to maximum effect, skillfully balancing out the hyper-action of some panels with the quiet stillness of a wide open shot.

Paul Sizer teaches graphic design at Western Michigan University, runs his own freelance design and illustration business, and in his spare time writes, illustrates and designs his comic book **LITTLE WHITE MOUSE**, published by Caliber Comics.

Paul lives and works in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

See more of Pauls work at [www.littlewhitemouse.com](http://www.littlewhitemouse.com).



## BEHIND THE PANELS: Parts Unknown - The Pin-up!

by Joe Corroney

Welcome to the first installment of what I hope to be a regular feature for this magazine (if my hectic freelance schedule allows it). In this new feature, we'll be looking at the creation process, step by step, of comic art and related illustration. First up, I'm taking you behind the scenes of a pin-up illustration I created for the new Image comic book *Parts Unknown*.

### Boot Camp

What's a 'pin-up', you ask? Well, if you're thinking of the pages stapled together in the middle of certain men's magazines, you're actually kind of close (though you need to get your mind out of the gutter...and make more room for mine since it's already renting space there). The term started during World War II when our boys overseas, longing for female companionship, would actually tear the pages of photographed models from magazines and pin them up in their barracks (or wherever). The post war pin-up craze really took off, and the term was associated with popular models like Bettie Page.

Pin-ups in comic books serve a similar purpose as they are a showcase for a particular book's character or characters. Many creators often use artists to illustrate their characters in his or her own unique artistic style. This gives the creator's readers a fresh take on an already established look, theme, or style in their comic book. This is also a chance for the artist to show off their dynamic talent and particular vision

of the character(s).

I was offered the task of creating artwork as a pin-up illustration for the comic book *Parts Unknown*. I was basically free to do whatever I chose, and after reading the entire series before it was published by Image, I had my idea in place.

### Fresh Tendrils and a Splice of Spacejam

I wanted to do a unique kind of pin-up concept for Beau Smith, the creator of *Parts Unknown*. I thought he might already be getting a number of pin-ups for this series, with the possibility of some being too similar in subject matter or composition. I wanted to try a different angle.

Since I love sci-fi and horror movies (both good and bad ones), this comic book was right up my alley. It had shape-changing, sex hungry aliens; beautiful babes, bone-crunching action, and enough hi-tech hardware that would make even Robocop smile.

My plan was to make my pin-up illustration work as a homage to old 1950's sci-fi and horror B-film posters with taglines and a classic composition. But I also wanted to give it a modern edge and make it unique and as dynamic as possible in my own style.

### Roughin' It

My first step in creating this movie poster pin-up was to find the right composition. I started by drawing a series of small rough sketches, or 'thumbnails', in my sketch book.

Sometimes it might take me two to ten or even more thumbnail sketches to find the composition I want. In this case, I was caught between two different comps I liked from the first few thumbnails I drew.

In *Example A*, I felt like making the two main villains from the story, the evil alien Scalon leader and his mistress Cynthia, the focus of the illustration. I have our lead heroes, Lucci and Spurr, playing a supporting role in their action poses on the lower right of the scene.



EXAMPLE A.

In my other thumbnail sketch (*Example B*) I created more of a montage scene with the same four characters, giving more emphasis to the alien bad guy. With the other three characters, I used a tier or pyramid design which gives more focus to Lucci in the center. Being caught between the two pin-up designs, I decided to explore both simultaneously until one felt more right to me and was what I was looking for.

The next step in the creation process was for me to take my initial palm-sized concept sketches and begin drawing them out to full size on



cases, as I did with his project, I actually enlarge the small, rough thumbnail sketch on a xerox machine until it fits the 11x17 inch board or 10x15 inch frame of reference. I then use my lightbox (a good one might set you back between a hundred and two-hundred bucks) to transfer the enlarged xerox sketch to my fresh sheet of bristol. I trace over some of the lines I want to keep and begin tightening up the overall composition by adding more detail and making my drawing stronger. In this new layer of penciling, working on the lightbox allows me to keep the layout of the composition consistent as I work from an initially small scale to a much larger scale.

As shown in *Example C*, I begin the process of 'fleshing in' the drawing by adding more form to the figures and building up more detail. Though initially I was partial to this composition, at this point I felt I was straying too far from the B-movie poster design I originally envisioned.

Switching gears, I moved onto my second design. Using the same technique with my lightbox, I began reworking the concept larger on my Blue Line Pro bristol board.

Looking at *Example D*, I kept this larger sketch a bit looser than Ex. C because I was still trying to figure out the positioning of type and of the characters.

In *Example E*, I finally started roughing in more of the drawing in regards to the characters and other details. I became much more confident about this rough sketch and finally felt I had my B-movie poster concept nailed down.

### Tighter and Tighter

In this third layer of penciling, I have tightened up the drawing and cleaned it up quite a bit by using my lightbox again over the second rough.

Ex. E. Giving my characters Blue Line Pro bristol board. In some

details such as clothing, weapons, and facial expressions with more concentration on anatomy, the illustration begins to take shape. Using a variety of textures for hair, clothing, the alien's skin, the star field, etc. helps separate the various aspects of this illustration. With some attention to dynamic light and shade, the final pencil result is *Example F*.

### Bleed Together

Once the pencil drawing is complete, I use my Speedball Super Black India Ink and my Hunt 102 crowquill pen and begin the inking process. I do use a tech pen to ink most of the straight edges and occasionally use black Design markers to fill in the larger black spaces, which speeds up the inking process for me. I still use India ink and dip pens for the majority; about 85% of the illustration.

Using a jar of white-out, I clean up the mistakes and smudges that I may cause from smearing the ink or diluting it with too much water, causing it to bleed through the fibers of the drawing board. I also use the white-out to paint in the stars of the outer space background I drew as the last touch. The inking process process is now complete as seen in *Example G*.

### Letter of the Law

I still have to address the aspect of type I originally intended on using, to make my movie poster pin-up for the comic book complete.

In my studio, I scanned the artwork into my Macintosh computer at 300 dpi and saved it as Photoshop file since I will be working in layers using type. I referenced some of the movie books in my personal library, getting a feel for typefaces common to such B-movie posters. Having reference for any project is a staple for any good artist serious about their craft.

One book I found especially useful was 'Reel Art: Great Posters from the Golden Age of Silver Screen'. I referenced the hundreds of



EXAMPLE B.



EXAMPLE C.



EXAMPLE D.





EXAMPLE E.



EXAMPLE F.



EXAMPLE G.

fonts in my computer until I found some that were similar to the ones used on the classic posters I found in my book. Since most of those fonts were hand drawn onto the artwork back then, this was much trickier than it sounds.

*Example H* shows the final lettering on a separate layer above the art using the Photoshop program.

Working with my art director on this project, Bob Hickey, we tried a variety of font styles and sizes and also made decisions together regarding the placement of type in the illustration. Working with Bob on this aspect of the project allowed me to second guess some of my original design decisions and get necessary creative feedback, which allowed for a more confident final.

As artists, another good habit we need to get into is to open ourselves up to comments and critiques. Often, we spend too much time hunched over our artwork and we never step back away from it with a fresh set of eyes. Also, it's possible to become too attached to your art and lose focus of the intent or purpose of the piece: that is, to satisfy your own creative whims, but to also please the masses of people who you're wanting to share your art with. The final artwork, complete with lettering, can be seen

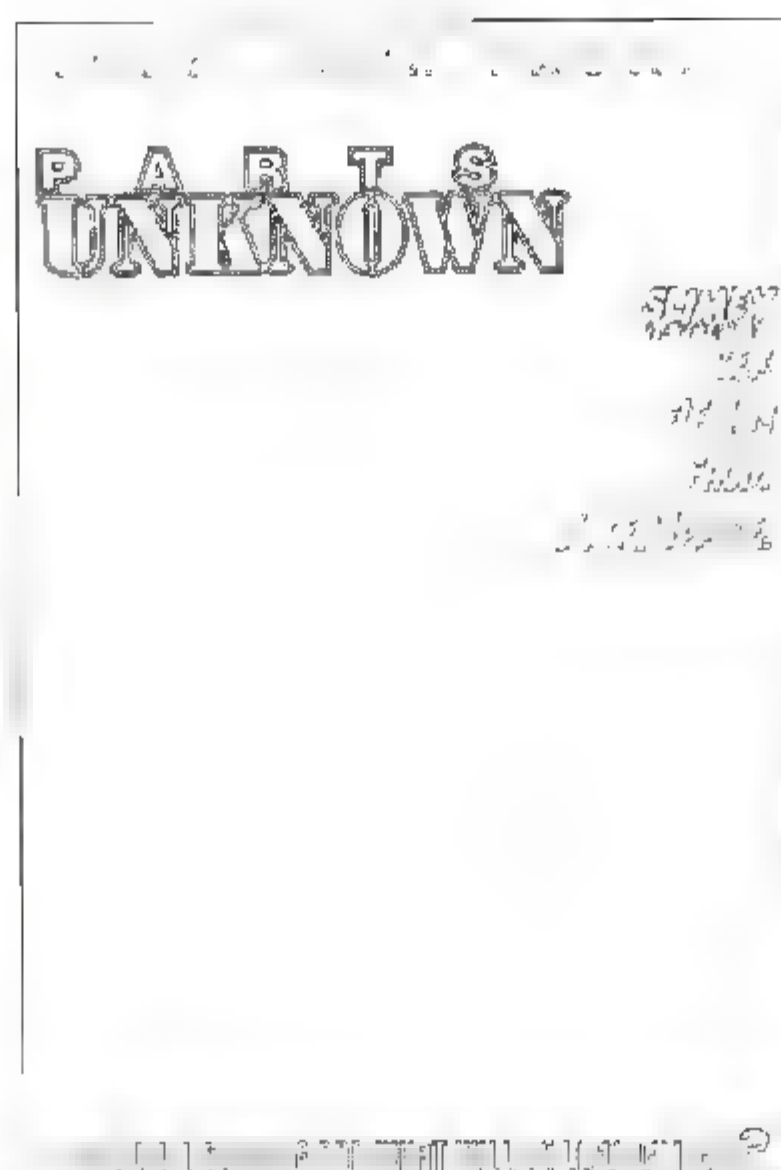
on the next page as Example I.

## No Wrong No Right

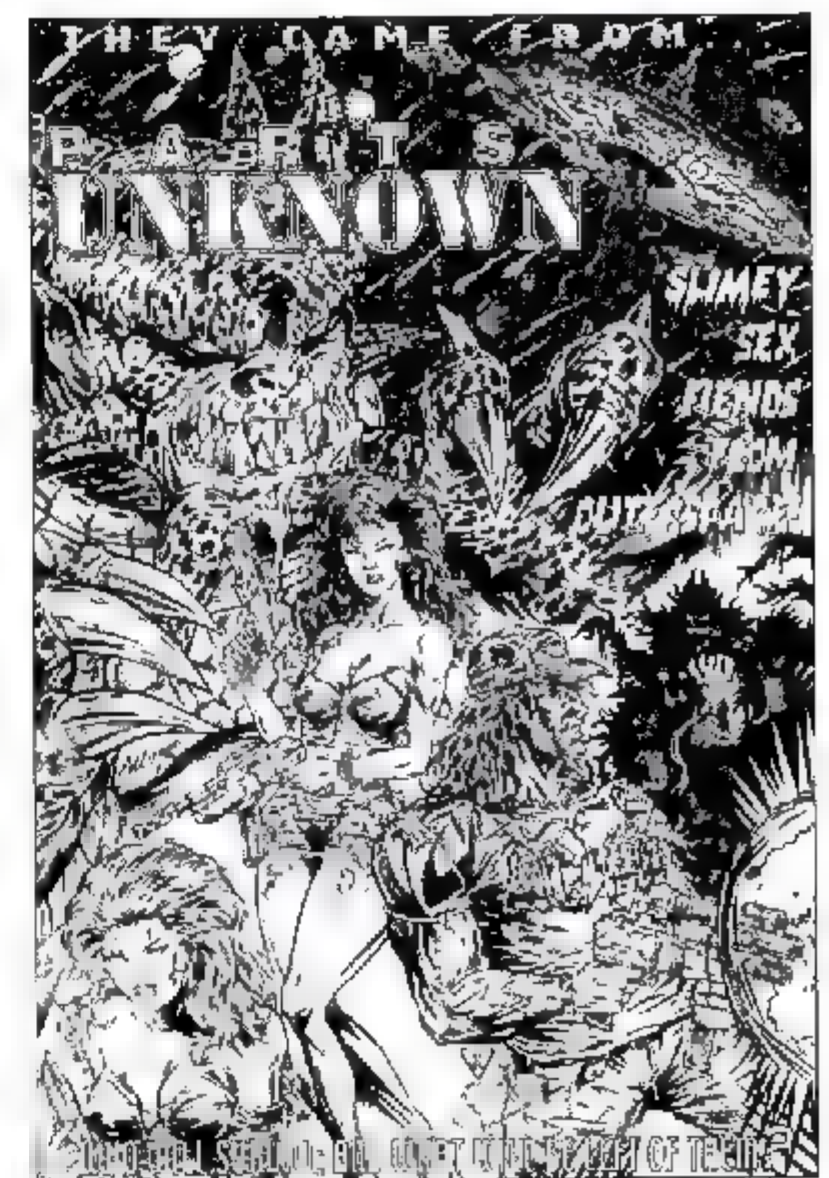
Hopefully I've shed some light on creating comic art as a pin-up, and the reasons it's done in the first place. As much fun as this looks, a lot of time, patience, and skill were all accounted for and are necessary whenever creating any kind of comic art or other professional illustration.

Just make sure you're doing art for the right reasons and that you keep it fun. Then, like this pin-up, it won't seem like work at all. Next month, I'll be taking you behind the scenes of my newest Star Wars painting and showing you the step by step process of it's creation from rough pencil sketch to the final color step. May the Force be with you...always.

Joe Corroney is the penciler for the upcoming Blood and Roses mini-series from Sacred Studios and a yet un-named publisher. He's also focusing his attention on creating more official Star Wars art for Lucasfilm and Wizards of the Coast, as well as currently illustrating for White Wolf Publishing and Microsoft's 'Age of Empires' collectible card game. In his spare time, he wanders aimlessly around his studio wondering why he doesn't have spare time...



EXAMPLE H.



FINISHED PIN-UP





## Using a hair dryer - as an art tool?

Who would have thought you may need to add a hair dryer to your drafting table? Just recently I read an article on Scott (Batman) McDaniel's web site about using a hair dryer on his art boards to remove moisture before he does any drawing on the board.

That got me thinking about the printing process of the art boards before they are shipped to the publishers and then distributed to the artist. Most publishers have a "frame" printed around the edge of the art boards to show the artist how much illustration room they have on the pages. This

board may also have markings to help the artist create panels.

Lets get back to the hair dryer. Like most papers, art boards are made from wood pulp. Wood pulp absorbs moisture like a sponge, even moisture in the air.

Water is used in the process of printing the paper. The printing press uses a water solution to clean ink off areas on the printing plate, thus adding another chance for the paper to absorb more water.

Why is this a problem? Simple. India ink is a pigment of color mixed

with water. When the water evaporates, it leaves the pigment of color. If you ink over an art board that has a large amount of water absorbed into it, this will cause the ink to spread and a bleeding problem occurs (Think of putting a drop of ink into a glass of water, then watching the ink cloud and spread).

Some papers are more likely to absorb water then others. You can experiment with different kinds. This could explain the times when you're using a pack of paper, and half way through the pack you start having a bleeding problem! Check to see if the humidity is high that day, or if it is raining.

To help with this unexpected and irritating problem, try to always keep your art boards sealed in a moisture - proof bag or box. But if you can't escape the damp, a hairdryer in the studio could provide a welcome warm breeze.

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**Cool!**



## More Inking The Comics: **INKING A PIN-UP**

by Dan Davis

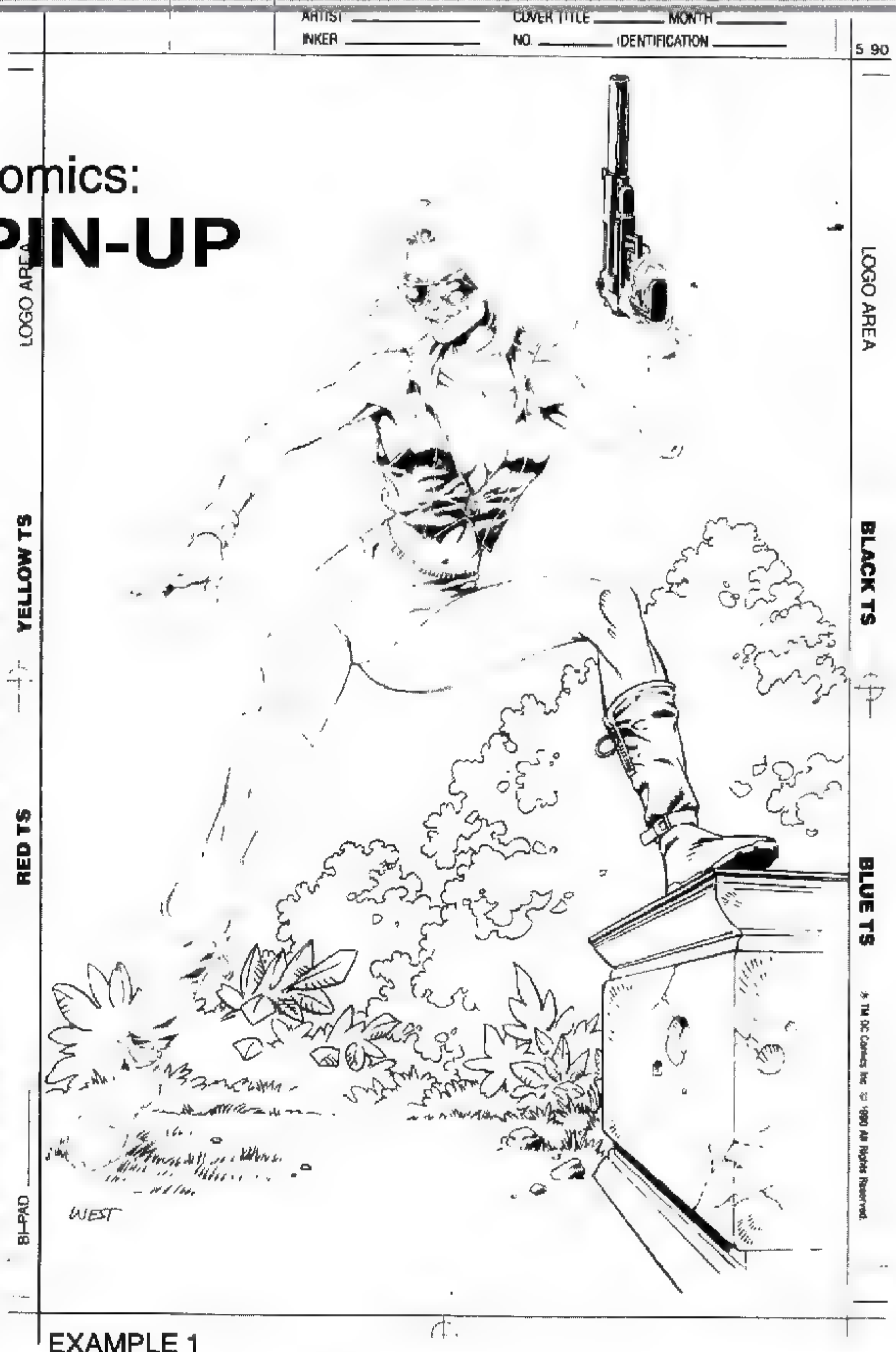
Few things are more fun about comics than working on the splash pages, pin-ups, and covers. Sometimes they are used to introduce characters, start a story with a real bang, or just for some fun, enjoyable eye candy. Whatever their purpose, they often use all the basics to inking, so I thought it would be fun to go through the process of inking such a page step-by-step to demonstrate my approach. Speaking of eye candy, your eyes have probably already noticed the Hottie with a gun gracing these pages. She is here courtesy of comics artist Kevin West, an artist I've had the pleasure of inking several times in the pages of Acclaim's *TROUBLEMAKERS* and DC's *SUPERBOY*, among others. Kevin is an artist brimming with ideas, and I wouldn't be surprised if you see this character soon - as one of many - in an original comic he's been cooking up. Thanks, Kev, for helping me out this time.

The first thing I like to do when I start on a project like this (besides pour me a nice cold ice tea) is just sit down and soak up the atmosphere of the drawing. Unlike a lot of people that start with the face or figure, I more often than not start with the background to warm up. This gets me into the drawing. Most

of the time I like to save the best parts (usually for me, the figure work) for last. This approach is not always possible if the pencils are rough. Then it is wiser to nail the figures first, and then define the background. But in this case, as you can see, Kevin is a precise penciler who puts down exactly what he wants. That makes it easy for me to start virtually anywhere on the page.

I started in the foreground, ruling the straight lines on the block that

our (hey Kev, is she a good girl - or a bad one?) "heroine" is resting her foot on. Hard to mess up a straight line, right? Actually you CAN if you make the line too thick or too thin. Generally speaking, the thicker lines are in the foreground and thinner in the background. In this case the block is in perspective coming towards the viewer, so I tried to emphasize that by making my lines a little thicker at the point closest to the front and then get thinner as



EXAMPLE 1



they go back towards the bushes. It's a subtle effect, but the idea is to trick the eye into thinking in 3D. I used a Hunt 102 Crowquill pen along the edge of a rolling ruler that I've raised up about 1/8" by taping a penny underneath, that way the ink doesn't smear under the ruler. The same pen point added the interior stone detail, very lightly, so the lines don't look as thick as the edges. Pretty exciting stuff, huh? Don't worry - we'll get to the girl soon! With the same pen I then move back to the bushes, keeping my lines thin to keep the bushes and grass behind the girl and not distract from her figure. Using light pressure helps, as crowquill pens can splatter ink when making curvy lines and changing direction. And be sure to use a good paper that doesn't tear up under the nib!

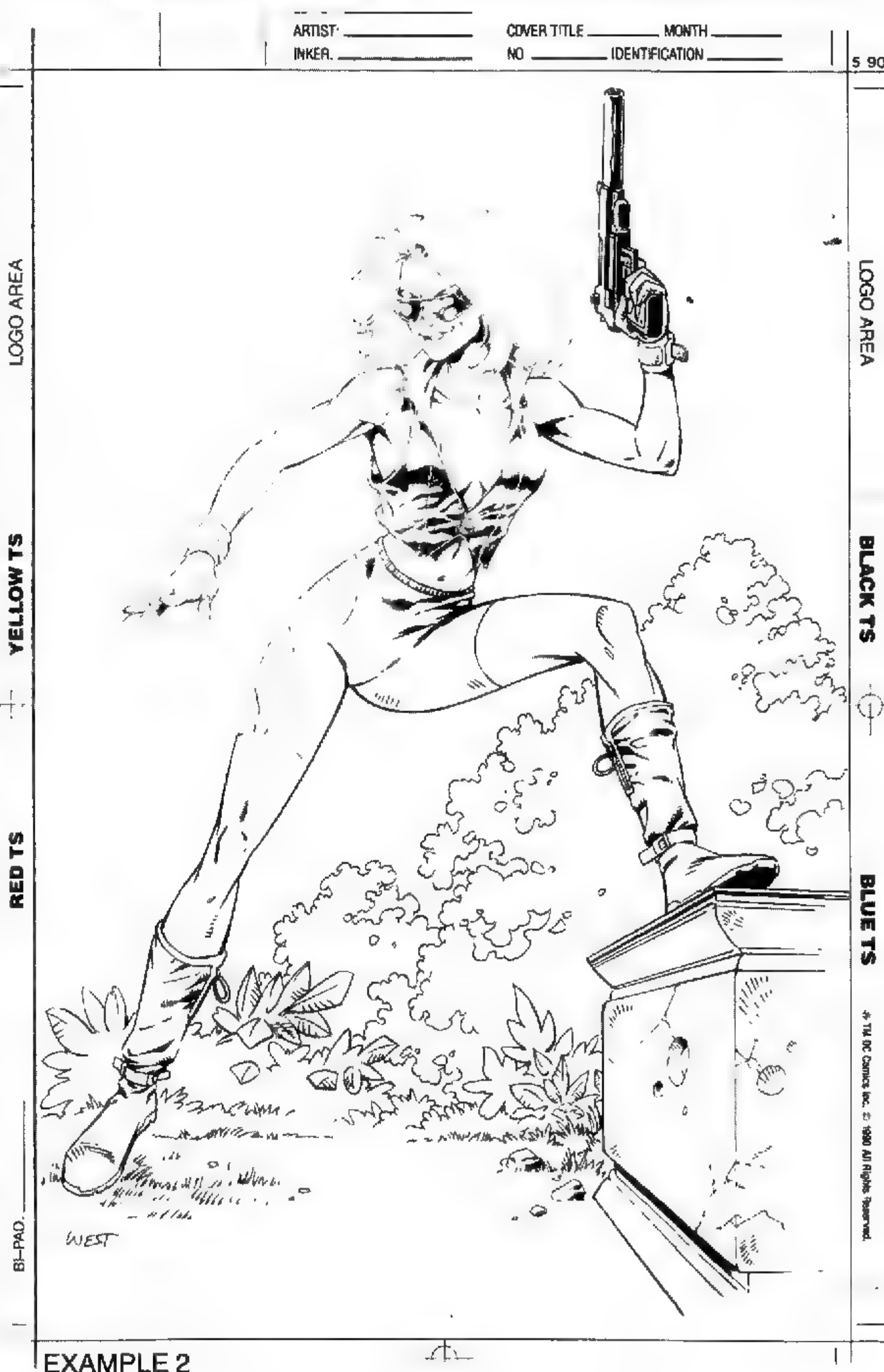
I kind of like to get the "hardware" out of the way too, so I inked her gun before moving on to the girl. The same pen and ruler works here. Oops! I drug my hand through the wet ink (the inker's curse) right by the gun, so I'll have to clean that up later with whiteout. You can also use technical pens or markers for the straight lines and I do use them sometimes, especially for circles and ellipses. However, an advantage to using the crowquill with a straight edge is that the same pen can make a thin line, and then with more pressure make a thick line, or go thick to thin with one pen stroke. All that switching pens for different widths tires me out and takes away from drawing time - besides that there's usually a deadline looming, so I'm always looking for ways to work fast!

And now to the girl (FINALLY). Again, it is natural to start with the

face, but you can begin anywhere. In this case I thought the boot on the block looked interesting with all its wrinkles and details, so I started with that. I may also have started with the gun and boot because they are both on the right side of the drawing and I am left handed. By working in that direction I minimize the time I have to wait for things to dry, and can keep working longer. Once I had some real comic book

deadlines, it didn't take me long to figure out that it was smart for me to work on two pages at once. Laying one aside to dry, while tackling another scene on the second, is another way to speed up your real inking output!

I continued to move along the figure doing the lower half (it looks like I was saving the face for last), and got out my Windsor Newton #2 brush for those long, flowing





LOGO AREA

YELLOW TS

RED TS

BI-PAD..



EXAMPLE 3 Finished Inks

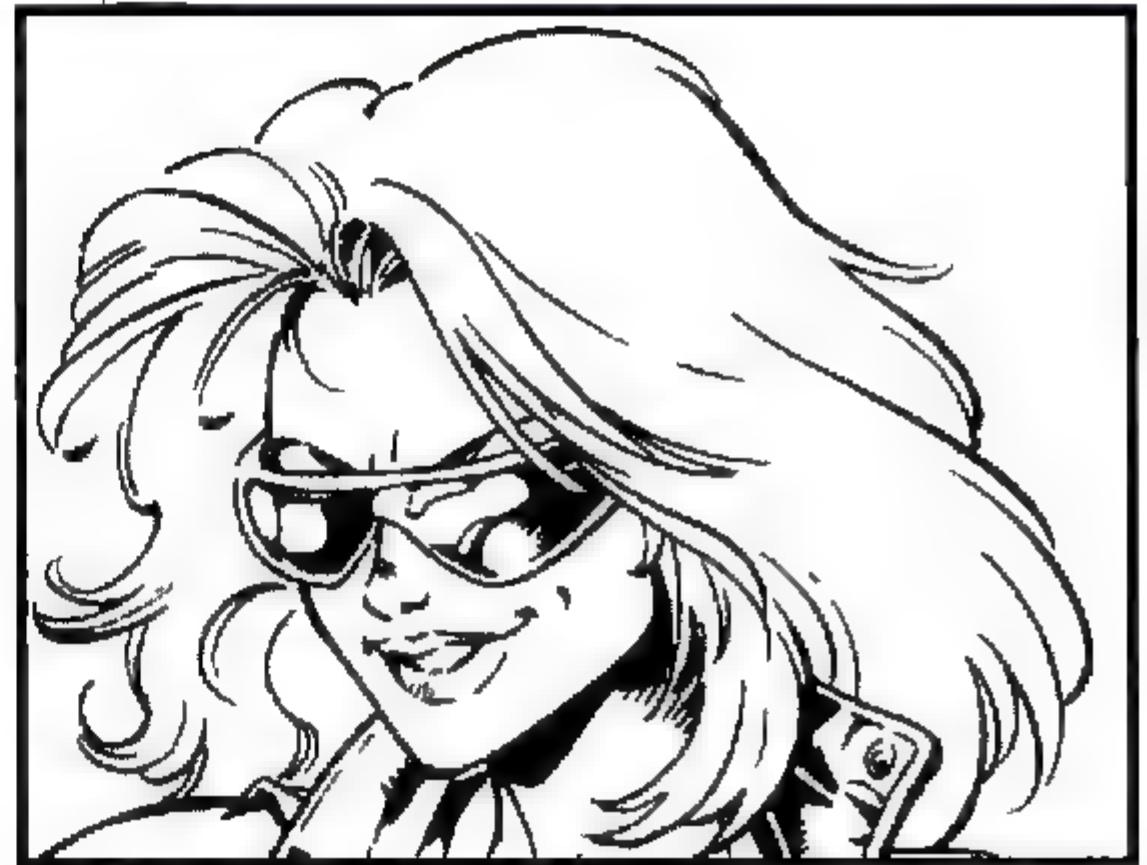
outlines defining her legs. With practice you can also use a crowquill for some of these lines; sometimes even use a raised french curve with a crowquill for a nice smooth curvy line. A brush is fast and can go as thick or thin as you want, so it works well here.

Yep, I saved the face for last. When choosing a tool I generally just use what "feels" right for the line, alternating between brush and pen.

For me, a pen works best on the

light inner detail because it has more of a "drawing" feel to it. I like to use the brush on contour lines or outlines, and sometimes for feathering effects which I usually stroke "in" to the solid blacks (like on the jacket shading).

Okay, it's time to finish up this dangerous face by using a brush for about half of the hair, with pen for the shorter strokes. Face detail and outline were all done with my Hunt 102 pen.



EXAMPLE 4 100% size of original

Finally it was time for the part I HATE about inking - erasing! But it is necessary for a clean drawing. Of course you should erase first, and then touch up smears and mistakes with whiteout. For that I use a Windsor Newton #1 brush (series 7 also), and Pelikan Graphic White. I will often smooth out rough lines with my whiteout brush, and correct places where a line crosses another line when I wanted them to just meet. Sometimes I'll "thin" down a line, if at the end I judge it to have been inked too thick. That's why I favor a brush for whiting out rather than some of these correction pens, since the brush offers so much more control. However, be aware that with certain markers the correction pens cover better than the water based Pelikan White.

That's about it. The only thing left to do is pat myself on the back, dream about fame and fortune, and sit back and admire my work...and Kevin's, of course, too. Nice job, Kevin.

You can practice inking this piece. Just blow it up on 11" by 17" paper. Lay a piece of drafting vellum over it, then ink right over my inks - or the pencils, whichever is showing. Both would be good practice, and lucky you...you won't have to erase anything!

BLACK TS

BLUE TS

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*All letters received will be considered for publication. Letters published will be done so as received in regards to spelling, punctuation, etc. - however, letters may be edited for length, language, and/or other considerations. All letters should be signed by the writer, as well as including the writer's legibly printed name, address, and contact numbers (phone, fax, e-mail). Opinions expressed are those of their respective letter writers, and not necessarily shared by Sketch Magazine or Blue Line Productions. While open as a critical forum, it is Blue Line's hope and intention that correspondence maintains constructive and positive elements of criticism. Simple name calling, rumor mongering, and/or maliciousness is not of interest. Unless our senior editor does it.*

## LETTERS

Bob,

In issue #2 of Sketch Magazine you asked in your editorial, how do we bring new readers to the comic book market? The Answer is simple: offer a superior product. If you offer a superior product it doesn't matter what industry you are in, people will clamor to it!

Why are people turning away from comics? Is it other high end entertainment? Partially. The real reason is the Comics industry itself. When Image came on board it opened the door for many independent publishers. As great as that sounds these publishers managed to only glut the industry with an overabundance of severely inferior product. They hired writers with no sense of drama or an overall outline. They hired pin-up artist with no sense of perspective or story-pacing. They hired editors with no feel for public demand. The result is the rag-tag mess of poor comics that we all weed through at the shops today.

Comic fans now must weed through the garbage comics to find the FEW gems that truly belong there. Most shops are not big enough to carry all the books on the Market. So a lot of Fans must shop at more than one store—a pain in the butt for them

Lastly, the price of paper continues to rise as paper becomes more of a limited resource. This drives comics cost through the roof on what already is seen as an inferior product.

How do we fix the problem? Offer a superior product and they (new readers) will come. Encourage children to read and they will come. Offer quality comics that defy imagination, push the limits of creativity, and shine with stunning images and they will come. Do not and thrive not. Without superior product, comics will NOT have a bright future.

Bruce W. Cashman

Bruce,

You have many great suggestions on why our industry is having it's down turn. I agree with you about getting young readers to look at comics as an entertainment source. Unfortunately we don't produce many comics that could be handed to young children, and the market doesn't support the new "young reader" books. So how do you offer books to an age group without the support of the in-

dustry? As for quality, I believe the gems will shine and the weeds will be sorted out. You would be surprised, though, how many creators started their career in a "weed" but are now offering us their "gems". If a book is unable to build a reader base then it won't be around very long. It costs too much to publish a vanity book for very long.

Another way to rebuild this market is to tag some other industries, CHAOS COMICS has been successful with their music line of books and wrestling. I understand their INSANE CLOWN POSSE trade paperback sold very well. Hopefully, those that were sold in music store type outlets will bring some fans into the comic shops.

- B.

Hello Bob! Greetings from Spain.

I have got the first issue of the Sketch magazine and it is absolutely great. It is what I have been looking for for a long long time. I have been always looking for an information magazine like this, tired of buying Wizard just for the basic training section. Having read your first issue I have ordered the three next issues appearing in the Previews catalogue without a doubt. I am a 31 years old fine arts graduated and I have been working as penciler-computer colorist in the multimedia business for two years.

Unfortunately, my contract has expired and now I am preparing several submissions for Marvel, DC, Image, etc....and the information appearing in your magazine is extremely useful. I have thought that I could send out some copies of my work and you could tell me something about my chances of breaking into the comic-book industry. It would be great if you gave me your opinion about it. That is all for now, thank you very much for your time and your attention.

Sincerely yours:

Jose M. Artundo

Jose,

Thank you for the kind comments on SKETCH, and I hope you're able to secure a position in the industry soon. As far as a review, we don't currently have the ability to respond. In just a very short time we have been flooded with submissions and requests to review work. We are working on a way to review, or at least showcase one's work for reviews. When that is available it will be announced in SKETCH.

Thanks,

- B.

Hello, greetings from Spain.

Great the second issue of Sketch. I think that, as you say that first issue is sold out, you should think about doing more copies.

You ask the question: Will comic books be around in 5, 10 or 15 years from now? My answer is yes, I think that they will not disappear. Why?

There are many reasons. When television appeared in everybody's home, lots of people said: this will kill the radio. Has TV killed the radio stations? No. When video appeared some-

body said: this will kill theatre and nobody will go to the cinema to watch a movie if it can be seen in your own TV. The same has been said recently about CDs taking the place of books. None of these things has happened because when something new doesn't eliminate all of the good things of something "old", this "old" thing remains.

These "other sources of high entertainment" you talk about I think are video games and the internet. Do comic books still have advantage over these new things? Of course, lots of them. They are a lot cheaper than video games, you don't need anything else than your eyes to read a comic book. For playing video games you need an expensive computer or a console. You can get old Kirby comics and enjoy them a lot, both stories and the amazing art. Can you get a 3 or 4 years old video game and enjoy it? The 90% of video games don't last longer than one year.

With the faster than light hardware improvement one-year-old video games seem like crap. When Playstation appeared it was incredible, now you compare its games to Dreamcast ones and they seem really bad. I was a great video-gaming fan but I have seen that they don't last longer and they are really expensive, so now I buy very very few. Instead I still buy lots of comics and illustration books.

I am a fine-arts graduate and I have seen through the years that the art of drawing and painting have been rejected from the world of art. The performances, installations and abstract forms of expression have substituted old drawing, sculpting and painting techniques. Where do all these rejected forms of art remain today? In illustration and in comics. Isn't Alex Ross a modern day artist like the ones in the past centuries? People always have admired these forms of art and they won't disappear killed by polygonal lifeless 3D graphics.

Anyone can make his/her own comic book. Maybe it isn't a great professional work but who cares? If you enjoy doing it and it releases your creativity, it's great. Could you make your own video game? No way. Video games require lots of specialized people, years of work and lots of money.

I think that the advantages of comics over video gaming are too many.

The main problem I see in comics today is the few diversity that exists. Comics are a medium like movies, you can tell any story you want through panels as it can be done in a movie. But there are too many superheroes and very few of the rest. Fortunately there are comics like Tellos or the Cliffhanger titles that have tried to diversify and today the "dungeons and dragons" comics are more popular, as manga-influenced ones. Anyway, the industry must diversify so anyone can find a comic book to read (as happens in Japan where everybody reads comics and they are the kings of video gaming)

And that's all. I hope you find my mail interesting.

Bye,

Jose

Some very good points Jose.

I think comics will always hold that special



place in the entertainment world. As with any other form of entertainment, comics must adjust with the times and diversify. I have to disagree with you on one point. The old 8-bit Nintendo game Gunsmoke is over 10 years old and is still awesome as ever.

- M<sup>2</sup>

Bob-

Congratulations on SKETCH magazine. I really think there's a need for a magazine like this, and going by your comments in your editorial, it seems I'm not alone.

A few thoughts regarding your editorial... As far as the future of comics...I would say it's left to those creators who are still around after all That has happened in the last couple of years. We have to realize that what we are doing now will impact the industry years from now. We must stay on top of what will keep the interest of a more sophisticated audience.

Thought... I would like to see creators approach our industry like Harley Davidson approached their market. Instead of trying to compete with the imports, they positioned themselves above those companies, and sold their bikes with attitude. We need ATTITUDE in our industry! We need to push the fact that all the cool stuff that Hollywood is putting out now was a result of ideas that came out of the comic industry years ago. WE are the cutting edge! Let's hit people over the head with that!

I imagine us like Cadillac. We are wasting an opportunity. Cadillac tries to make cars to compete with BMW, Lexus...Imports. This is wrong. Cadillac should be going in an opposite direction...Lot's of chrome, lot's of steel, and lots of money. I guarantee you that there would be a waiting list for a two-ton Cadillac that was completely decked out like people really want. People want a status symbol.

That's what our customers want too! We have to approach every book that we produce as something you can't get anywhere else other than a comic shop. We need to make books that make people go "WOW".

It's easier said than done, but it takes a more united effort among the current publishers...big and small. It takes an effort from the distribution level. It takes an effort from the retail level. We must try to work together to spread the word of why we're not going to compete with the internet, video games, and movies...We are going to dominate in our own backyard, and everybody's invited to the party!

Our industry will be around years from now, but it may look a lot different. We must inspire our future creators now by coming up with new and innovative ideas. What was way cool back then, has been milked dry.

It's time to offer something new for everyone. I have hope that there's a kid out there who still pulls out the flashlight and reads under the covers, who will someday be our next superstar...Let's make sure he's

got something good to read.

Talk to you soon!

Aaron Hubrich

Owner, Intelagraphics

Aaron,

Wow!

I agree with you about the attitude, we do need to look at other industries such as Harley Davidson and how they've turned things around for their markets.

As far as inspiration we are hoping that the professionals and the newbies of this market will use this magazine as a launching board on ideas and tips to share within the comic book community, and from that knowledge new changes and directions can be developed.

Thank you for your letter, it's inspiring to us here that someone else has the admiration of this industry.

Thanks,

- B.

Hi bob...

Tim Vigil here, I am a comic artist for the last 13 years, mainly in the independent field with such titles, you may know, Faust, Gothic Nights..

I enjoyed the first issue of Sketch very much. It was interesting and informative. Thanks for having the insight to teach instead of a magazine that panders to an ignorant audience (a.k.a. Wizard...) Just with the articles you did, I was able to understand the comic medium better and how it works.

I would be happy to contribute whatever I can to the success of Sketch.

Thank you.

Tim,

The door is open, please come on in and have a seat at our table.

Sincerely,

- B.

Tim Vigil's intricate, controversial illustration and linework is a real (if sometimes unsettling) treat for those of us old enough to view much of it. If you enjoy lush brushwork and incredible detail in a Wrightsonesque vein, you should definitely check out Tim's material (though it should be noted much of it is for SKETCH's mature readers).

Hope to hear from you soon, Tim.

- Flint

Dear Blue Line Folks + Blue Line Letter Column,

I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for putting together Sketch Magazine. The comic industry has needed such an informative publication for quite some time and you guys did something about it! Kudos!

I am writing you with a few suggestions for future Sketch columns that my associates and I came up with while reading your magazine.

Your instructional columns are great. I would be interested in any instruction columns on developing web comics- using html code and Flash to make interactive comics online. This seems to be the wave of the future since now that Marvel and other companies are putting their new comics up on the web.

I would also like to see a column that acknowledges some of the obscure, unknown small press comic publishers and their contributions to the art form. Small press publishers often only produce a handful of copies of their books or none and prefer to publish their works solely on the

web.

Obviously these small press folks are completely ignored by such publications as Wizard. Since your magazine is aimed to educate and assist the beginning comic book creator such a section would be welcomed.

Speaking as a completely unknown creator I can guarantee it will be appreciated. My own series, Mad Beanz!, is currently available only on the web ([www.madbeanz.com](http://www.madbeanz.com)). I can also recommend a large number of other independent publishers. Many of their work can be found on the Impromanga site ([www.impromanga.org](http://www.impromanga.org)). Impromanga is a site where one artist starts a comic and another artist continues it and so on. It's all published solely on the web. This site deserves a mention by itself!

Anyhow, kudos again for your fine work! My only other suggestion is that you guys to find an editor who can correct punctuation and do some proofreading- (heh, not that I can really complain since typos are often bountiful in my own work).

Later!

David Kolodny-Nagy

Smorgasbord Productions

David,

With SKETCH #4 we will begin an article that is filled with information about designing on the net. You'll want to see the book section of this issue - and pick up a copy of <designing web graphics.3> by Lynda Weinman (also see her website at [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com)).

As far as the news at this time, SKETCH is really a place to promote a comic, but if an indy has some knowledge, tip, or suggestion to pass along to others, we would be more than happy to run it with the publishers' info attached. As we did with your letter.

Best of luck.

Sincerely,

- B.

Editors,

I have a few comments and suggestions to offer on behalf of your new publication SKETCH magazine. I must say the topic is a beautiful idea.

I've been waiting for something like this for quite some time. Many other art forms have magazines of the "how-to" nature, such as screenwriting, quilting, etc. It is about time for this one. I must admit that some aspects of your magazine could use improvement.

1. Quit assuming your readers consist of children, and children only. I don't mean that your articles are not intelligent, but they are not what I had hoped. Leave the children with Wizard. It is good to start basic, but I had hoped to see things that aren't in any art technique books.

2. I was very disappointed in the minuscule length of the "Todd McFarlane's Secret To Spawn's success" interview. I mean it was less than two pages long, there were no Secrets to Spawn's or anyone's success. The questions were not bad, but were not pertaining to the cover's claims.

3. The "friggin" catalog takes up half the



magazine! I say compile all nine pages into 1 or 2 page spread. Leave the order form to a paper insert, like those for so many magazine subscriptions.

4. Last, but not least, keep it up. You are on the right track. The whole concept is wonderful, and you are doing a great thing, quit worrying so much about art supply sales, and more about the art form you are working to improve. And remember that has to be the goal, or the whole thing is worth sh\*\* (my "s" - ed.). Pardon my French. But it is true, art first, paper sales next. Oh, I noticed various spelling mistakes, but that is a minute problem. You keep on doin' it, I'll keep buying it. Oh and tell the boys that there art board is at the top of the food chain.

Thank you for your Time.

Aaron Warren  
Columbia, MO

Dear Aaron

We honestly appreciate your taking the time for your very honest feedback. Mr. Beau Smith's column this issue points out the importance of doing just that (and many other things). You've been quite frank in expressing your views; I hope I address them to your satisfaction.

I agree with your disappointment at the length of Mr. McFarlane's interview in SKETCH #2, one somewhat abbreviated due to unfortunate and very last minute problems on our end. The personality, talent, and success that is Todd could fill volumes, and someday hopefully will - now there's a book! However, I still feel it was an interesting and entertaining read. And Todd might actually HAVE revealed a secret or two, if you take a minute to reread the admittedly short piece. Rest assured that plans are to make upcoming interviews more extensive and probing. We have some tremendous talent already lined up, maintaining our impressive caliber of cover stars - I hope you'll find future interviews more satisfying. Did you read the David Mack interview in SKETCH #1?

"Leave the children with WIZARD"? Well no. SKETCH will continue to contain material for the full age and skill range of comic book lovers, so we hope you'll bear with us through content you find below your level. We at SKETCH cannot stress enough how we'd love to see more children enjoy comics, a reading group the field is sadly missing for the most part. I started drawing at a very young age; I can safely assume many other professionals did as well. If we can catch children's interest in art, and aid in their enjoyment and development of their talent, we'll certainly do so. Hopefully, many of SKETCH's older crowd will bring the information - and fun - to their children and other youngsters. A rewarding experience for all, time well shared and well spent however, with possible exceptions such as the single page MANGA article, I'm curious as to what you apparently considered "childish" content? Joe Corroney's ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING? Chris Riley's DIGITAL COLORING? My COVER STORY?

Our catalog - half the magazine? Again,

no. An adult fact of commercial magazine publishing you might not be aware of is that advertising is what generally supports the magazine. In particular instances, it's been argued that magazines exist only as vehicles FOR their advertising. The reality is that great amounts of money (naturally, the amount varies with the magazine in question) ride on magazine printing, overhead, and distribution. Blue Line has a very respectable cost to cover just to see SKETCH to print, and does so with a VERY bare minimum of around 10 pages of advertising to support it. Again, I'm curious - what other magazines do you read? I'd like to study their page/advertisement ratio. However, if we do "quit worrying so much about art supply sales", it's good to know you've set us a qualitative goal and worth. Our many contributors, working mainly for personal interests and the pleasure of sharing their craft, appreciate your estimation of their efforts.

Finally, I'm glad you at least feel we're on the right friggin' track. I only hope you haven't friggin' outgrown us. Stick with us, Aaron.

- Flint

Hello,

I just picked up Issue 2 of SKETCH magazine and was really impressed!! I am having my comic book store in Denver order each issue for me.

The articles and quality of the magazine are excellent-finally something of value for potential artists and writers in the comic book industry.

All the stores here in Denver are sold out of Issue 1 and they say they can't get it. I didn't even realize that it was out in January or I would have picked it up then. Are you going to do a reprinting of Issue 1? The comic storeowners here I've talked to said they have had quite a few people asking for Issue 1.

Thanks,

Craig Banister  
Denver, Colorado

As of right now there are no plans to reprint issue 1. We only have a handful left, and those are reserved for future subscribers. Thanks for the interest though. We might be able to reissue #1 if the demand keeps up.

- M<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Hickey,

Just got the second issue of SKETCH, and I am enjoying its contents. I came across the first issue a couple months or so ago, and asked the comics shop to order a copy for me. Now they've ordered copies to put out on the racks as well.

I work at an advertising agency proofing and copyediting material, as well as producing a newsletter each month. I certainly enjoyed both issues of SKETCH, but it could be even better with more thorough proofreading of the articles. Though your offices in Kentucky are not exactly local to me (I'm in the Los Angeles area), we are close in terms of fax and e-mail.

It turns out I've bought a pack of your comic pages from my store. I'm involved with a group

who's self-publishing our second comic (We're getting it done just before the San Diego Comic-Con next month). Speaking of the Con, will SKETCH have a table there?

Thanks,

Johnny Lowe

Dear Johnny

You're one of many that have pointed out our unfortunate proofing errors, something that's marred our first two issues. If you're cranking at an ad agency you're familiar with pressure, so you don't need to hear any of my excuses about our hectic publishing schedule and deadlines. This is something we're going to try hard to improve upon.

Say, you didn't mention the name of the comic you're working on? Hope you had a good time in San Diego.

- Flint

To the Editors

I just wanted to drop you guys a quick line to express my appreciation of your magazine. I've wanted to draw comics since I was a kid and I wish your magazine was around then. I find your tips and hints extremely helpful, as an artist my work has improved because of your magazine. I found two negative things about your magazine. Number one, how about a letters column? Number two, your magazine isn't long enough. Hey it's got to last me 2 months. Either make your magazine longer or please publish it monthly. Other than that you guys are doing a great job and I look forward to future issues. Also thanks so much for the signed print that I got for subscribing to your fine magazine. I went out this weekend and had it framed.

Again thanks.

Andrew Johnson

Well to answer your questions:

1. Sure. You are reading it right now. This issue is our first with a letter column.

2. We hope to bring SKETCH to a monthly basis in the coming year. With things going as they are now, monthly is looking pretty good.

Thanks,

- M<sup>2</sup>

Hi Dan

First I'd like to say how much I enjoyed your article in 'Sketch' magazine. Just when I thought I knew all there was to know about comic art you go and throw me a curve!

1. Could you recommend a good brand of drafting vellum? I have tried to use regular tracing paper in the past, but I imagine I'll get better results with the vellum.

2. An artist currently working on Captain Marvel was nice enough to give me some pencil copies of his stuff. I went to Kinko's to get it copied in blue on some BlueLine Strathmore comic pages, but they said the thick paper would get jammed in their machine. Is there a way around this dilemma, or do I just go with the vellum method?

That's all for now. I hope I haven't worn out my welcome!

Thanks so much for your article. It was very



enlightening and accompanied by excellent artwork!

Rama Persaud

1. I don't know if you'll find that much of a choice in drafting vellum. I'm using Pla-Za #55 Vellum. The main reason I bought it was that it was pre cut to 11x17" size so I didn't have to mess around cutting it off of a roll. The key phrase to ask for is "drafting vellum" and try out what they have. You'll notice the difference between tracing paper and good vellum immediately! The tracing paper is ultra thin and crinkles. Pencils smear easily on it. Vellum is thicker, translucent, and while it will smear pencils, it will hold the line better. If you tried to ink with tracing paper it would absorb and get blotchy and run everywhere, but vellum, again, will hold the ink line and work especially well with brush. Pen techniques are harder, but can be done.

2. First, you did the right thing getting a pro to give you pencil copies. Usually you can find one willing to help you out with a few photocopies to practice on. My local copy shop can copy on a bristol board, but maybe some can't. Try another shop would be my first advice, but in lieu of that you might try inking on the Strathmore with a light board if the photocopies are dark enough to see. I don't feel I can see all the artist's pencils this way though, so I usually opt for vellum! Nothing will be as perfect as inking on the original art board over fresh pencils, but when doing samples you have to be creative. Most editors realize and compensate a little (sometimes very little!) for this handicap.

Thanks yourself for writing in Rama and good luck!

- Dan

Hi Dan,

Thanks so much for answering my queries on vellum...

I now have a question that I have had on my mind for some time, and that is whether or not copies from a copy machine would be as good as work done at a printer.

As I type this question, it sounds to me incredibly assinine because I feel that the answer would be obvious. However, I'm still curious because I've always been told to make reduced copies of my inks so that I could see how my inks 'held up'. I've done this several times but am not convinced that making these copies would yield the same results. Am I getting a 'true' picture of what my work would look like in print?

Thanks again,

Rama

Hi again Rama, and thanks for writing.

There are many factors that go into "print" quality" as well as "copier quality", but simply put, the important thing is to review your work in a reduced size as close to the actual printing size as possible. The copier is the best solution for doing this.

A good copy at the correct exposure (too dark will make the lines thicker and too light will lose all your thick to thin line variation),

will look better than the final printing if you're considering the ink line. The printed version will not only be reduced from the original size, but also have color, color separations, paper quality, and production details affecting the results.

Bottom line is there are many factors out of your control that will determine how your inking work will look in print, but the reduced copier test is the best way an artist can check their work before sending it in.

Thanks for asking and good luck!

- Dan

Dear Chris

I just got SKETCH magazine and have only just sat down to try out your Photoshop colouring instructions. The only difference is I'm using Photoshop 5.5 instead of 5.0. I found your instructions easily matched my version, but I do have a little problem. When I've got to the last step and started messing round with the airbrush, the colour simply WON'T APPEAR!! Now I'm not a techie-head or anything, but I have read your article about 25 times today to see if I'm doing something in believably stupid; I've also consulted a cousin who's doing a course in multimedia and graphics, she can't figure it out either.

Is there anything else I need to do to get the colour visible, or is it simply that it's meant to stay Invisible until you hit "Preview" again at the end?

Yours

Mike Sheehy

Dublin, Ireland

Mike,

One of the steps I believe you are skipping is the part where you are supposed to re-select the "Color" layer. If you have the Line art layer selected the color will not appear correctly. Another step you could have over looked is when you are supposed to drag the "this layer" slider from 255 to 254 in the Layer options window. Double check these steps and keep at it.

- Christopher

Chris,

Thank you so much for your article on Digital Coloring. I found it very informative and entertaining. I do have a few questions to ask about being a colorist and Photoshop

#1 - How can I produce the sharp color tones that I see in certain comic books? (I.E.- Image books, x-men and other popular books. The airbrush look is good but I like the other look better. It is visually more stunning.)

#2 - How much does a colorist make? Full Time & Part Time.

#3 - How long does it usually take to break into the colorist field

#4 - How many colorists are there?

I've enclosed some of my work. This is my first attempt at being a colorist and I would love it if you could point out any strengths and faults for me.

Thank you for your time and keep up the good work.

Payton Gauldin

P.S - More Photoshop!! More Photoshop!! More Photoshop!!

Thank you for the kind words Payton. My ego could always use a boost. As for your questions here goes.

1. See this month's article. Yeah, I know that's a cheap answer but I'm limited on what space I have so I'm trying not to be repetitious woops too late.

2. Money. How much do we get paid to fill in the lines. Well this depends on who is paying you, how good you are, and what type of project it is. If you are a freelance colorist the average page rate I hear the most is between \$75-\$100. Now this is not just plain coloring. This is the works. There are others that charge less but as the saying goes "you get what you pay for". Covers are a little bit more expensive, \$125-\$200. The reason for this is because you are obviously going to spend more time on a cover to attract the buyer. The \$200 range is usually for a wraparound cover. There have been people (editors, publishers) complain about the prices, but if you consider how much time is involved on one page the price is really not that exaggerated. Now if you are working in a studio environment for a publisher or a coloring house, you will be paid by the hour. Since I have always been a freelancer I am unsure of the going hourly rate.

3. There is no time limit to how long it takes to break into the comic book industry as a colorist. It depends on if you are willing to relocate to work in a studio or if you are willing to go out there and sell yourself as a freelance colorist. If you work at your craft, and I mean make it a labor of love, your talent will show in your art. Put in the hours and hours practicing. If you can get a job coloring just a cover for a small press publisher for little or no money go ahead and do it. At the end of the day you will have something in your hands that shows you have been published. In the beginning of your career is when you have to work your hardest. I'll get off of my podium now.

4. That is a very good question. I have been doing conventions for years. It wasn't until this year when SKETCH came out that I really started seeing colorist show up at conventions. I talked to over a dozen at the SKETCH table at the Wizard World Con. There are quite a few out there. I can say that there probably is about 1 potential colorist to every 30 potential pencillers. Colorists are similar to writers in this field. We do a lot of work and rarely get the fame that a person who pencils does.

I was only able to open one of the files that you sent me. The one I did get open was the Superman file. You are off to a very good start. The main thing I see that you could improve on is your airbrushing. It looks great on the chains, but on the skin it is a bit harsh. The strokes are too solid and do not look natural. You can leave what you have there, but come back in and fade the edges of the strokes to feather out a little smoother. You did a great



job on the chains. The lights and shadows work perfectly together. I noticed that you put in shadows of each chain link on each other. That really adds depth to the image. His nose looks very nice too. The key word is "smooth" when you are working on a piece. You can put in hard highlights but you want them to appear natural and not like they were airbrushed in or placed there. You want the coloring to work with the line and not appear as separate things.

- Christopher

Hi Chris,

I read the article you wrote in the February issue of Sketch. It was a wonderful and interesting article. I tried using the process that you taught. However I was unable to print out my colored works. There was nothing wrong with my printer but I just couldn't get the material printed (I saved my finished product in jpeg form). How should I go about to get my finished work printed?

Your fan,  
Mun

This is a tough question for me to answer. Without knowing what kind of printer you have or if you have ever been able to print from Photoshop before, it's hard for me to address the situation. One thing you need to do before printing is to make sure you are printing to the correct printer driver. Another problem may be that your computer does not have enough RAM (memory) to complete the task of printing a Photoshop. Even though it is in jpeg form the file may be just too much for your computer to handle.

Keep me updated on your progress.

- Christopher

Hello Mr. Hickey:

I wrote to you from Dominican Republic. I like comics and I want to learn all secrets about the art of create comics. In my country we have no the big tradition of comics like you the Americans. Last month I bought your magazine "Sketch". I like your magazine you give many tips for the aspiring artist. About your magazine I think you must include more detailed examples like Basic training section of wizard magazine. Excuse my comparison, I have a question for you, I know you are a pro.

I know two guys (professional painters) who told me the use of stick figures, basic cylinders and wood mannequins for to draw human figure is a big crap. They told me that those techniques are ancient and useless for good drawing.

Please help me,

Best regards

Raul

Dear Raul

I don't want to disagree with your acquaintances without knowing more about your particular conversation, but I have known some of the things you mentioned to be of use for particular artists. For my personal taste, however, drawing from life - sketching your friends and family doing everyday things, etc. - is the most rewarding exercise for any art-

ist. There's nothing like a live model to teach you about the human form and the play of light. We have upcoming features on figure drawing; in the meantime I'd be interested in more of your painter friend's opinions. Until you decide on what helps you the most, the important thing is that you keep drawing! Don't stop, you'll make your decision as you go

- Flint

Whatever happened to Sketch magazine I cannot find it in my area and am afraid to subscribe since our local comic shop cannot even order it. It is a brilliant idea and some friends and I are dying to purchase a copy.

Has this magazine been solicited or is it in limbo?

I have not received March, April or May issue of sketch magazine what's going on?

Joel Rhone

Sketch is bi-monthly right now. If you cannot find sketch in your area, keep hounding your local comic shop to order it or subscribe.

Thanks for your interest,

- M<sup>2</sup>.

This concept is long overdue Keep it coming  
Adam

We plan to.

Thanks for the support.

- M<sup>2</sup>.

BLUELINEPRO

Hey, I use your comic pro pages (nice stuff, it holds up well to an eraser!) I'm not inking my samples and I noticed that they are fading from just pulling them out of my portfolio. I use a 2H lead and don't want to go to a H or HB. Any chance you can suggest a good sealant with no side effects to the art.

Thanks;

Tent Keim

Tent,

Try Krylon Workable Fixatif. Spray several light coats, turning the board each time to get even coverage. It should work fine. Also, you may want to bag them or cover with a piece of tissue paper.

Thanks,

- B.

Hi

My name is Robert Johns and I am a commercial illustrator and screen printer. I have been using your products for about a year and half and I enjoy your products tremendously. I look forward to subscribing to Sketch Magazine in the near future and wish you all success in your endeavors. Godspeed to you all.

Sincerely,

Robert Johns

Thanks Robert,

- M<sup>2</sup>

Greetings,

First, I must apologize for not remembering the names of the two gentlemen who ran the blue line booth at the Motor City Comic Con. I'm

awful with names unless I constantly see you. I'm the fellow KY boy who was set up behind you and went ga-ga over finally finding Sketch magazine. Oh yeah, my name is Mitch by the way.

Anyhow, I read both issues of your magazine and thoroughly enjoyed myself. Since I'm the colorist for Illusion Studios I'm really interested in your digital coloring section. I found it to be very informative, but would like to know one thing. Does the artist that is doing the articles have a color palette that he consistently uses? I like the highlight of the various Photoshop tools but would like to know what color break-up he is using; other than that I'm just tickled to death that someone is out there doing this.

Peace,

Mitch Ames

Hey Mitch,

The guys (Bob & Mike Hickey) were glad to hear you remembered them. I unfortunately was not at that convention. I do use a customized color palette (see the Digital Coloring column this issue). It is one that is in constant change. I do not always keep every color that I create.

Being a floating freelance artist I tend to be working on many different computers. So what I'll usually do is either save my palette to a disk with my job in progress, or I'll simply pull the color with the eyedropper tool from the image itself. I do have a set of flesh tones.

Those are things that once you get it right you do not want to have to try and match them. One thing to remember is to create all of your colors in cmyk on the color palette and try to work in cmyk mode or cmyk preview mode. This insures you that when the job goes to print the colors will match. As far as my color break-up or creating colors, after being a colorist for so many years you get an eye for things. I also use a lot of experimentation with color to see what works best.

I am interested in seeing what my fellow colorists are doing out there, so if you have some work send it in to me. If you can send a 300dpi image I may even be able to print it in the magazine.

- Christopher

Those stepping up this issue to answer questions

B / Bob Hickey

M<sup>2</sup> / Mike Maydak

- Flint / Flint Henry

- Christopher / Christopher Riley

- Dan / Dan Davis

As always we try to pass the letters along to those of us that have the most knowledge of the subject that your letter is referring to. And, if all else fails we leave it to our most trusted senior editor Flint Henry (That's why he gets paid the big bucks)



## Digital Coloring: HIGHLIGHTS AND CONVERSIONS

By Chris Riley

In this month's installment we'll go a little more in depth than the last two issues' columns. We will be discussing:

1. How to use highlights on your color images to add depth and contrast.
2. How to convert line art to color line art.
3. How to set up a swatch palette.

First I would like to comment on the response we have received here at Sketch magazine about the digital coloring column. I would like to give a big thank you to everyone who has sent me e-mails and letters about Digital Coloring. See the new letters column in this issue for responses to your questions and comments.

### *Going into the Light(s)*

The best way to make your coloring and the artwork jump off the page is to add realism. When you are working on a cover, a splash page, or even just a kick @\$\$ action scene that you really want to grab the reader's eye; remember to add white highlights. I'm not talking about

a simple 30% screen of a color, I'm talking about a 100% white highlight. The kind that you would see if you had a huge spotlight shining on your character or scene. The kind that would leave shadows so dark they almost blend together. There are a few colorists out there in the industry doing an outstanding job with this technique. One of the coloring companies to take this digital technique to the next level is

Liquid Graphics, created by Christian Lichtner and Aron Lusen. Definitely check out the work they are doing for Top Cow and Marvel. Before we jump into it here, I want to mention that you should not limit yourself to other digital colorists for inspiration. Some of the best color techniques you can pick up are found in the art of painters, such as Alex Ross. The next time you see one of his paintings take a closer look and see what really makes his art stand out. It's the super bright highlights that he uses. John Bolton, Travis Charest, Tony Harris, and Moebius are a few others that use this technique in various ways.

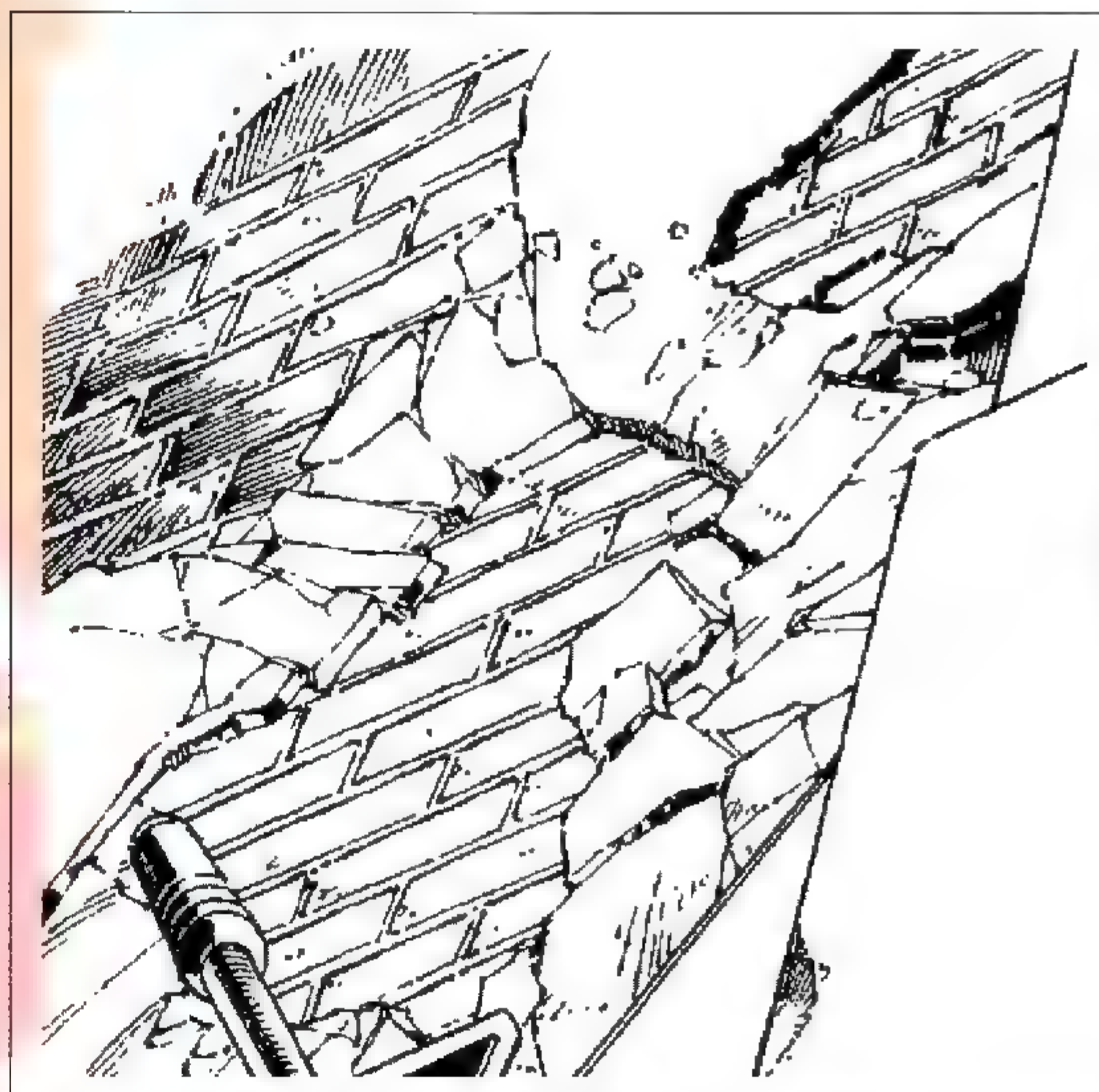


FIG. 1 ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR SCANNING



### ***Now on to the Show***

The first thing you need, of course, is an image to work with. Unlike all of our other installments, we are going to provide you with the image to start with this month. It is going to be printed in the magazine in black and white for you to scan (See Fig.1.). If this is your first time coloring, you may need to go back and look in Sketch #1 and #2 for more information on getting started. I am going to be using a brick wall section. It is a fairly boring part of the overall image, but it is the attention to detail that really brings out the artwork. This month I am going to put everything in numbered steps. Please let me know if this works better for you or if it is just a pain.

1. Fill in your base color for the bricks. For mine I am using a maroon (or on the CMYK Color Palette C-27%, M-81%, Y-70%, K45%. See Fig.2.
2. To add immediate depth to the bricks I airbrushed in a dark area between each individual brick. See Fig.2.
3. Now zoom in on one of the bricks. Using the lasso tool select a small section of the brick on its right side and fill it with 10% white as seen in Fig.3.
4. Now using a small (28pixels), soft (hardness 0%), 10-20% white airbrush; lightly glide over the brick on its farthest right side while it is still selected. Do this repeatedly until you get the desired effect and repeat it for each brick. See Fig.4.

**Note:** Because the light source in this image is coming from the right, you will want to vary the highlights that you add to the brick as you get further to the left. Notice how I actually darkened the bricks on the left side in the final piece. See Fig.5.

This is a very stripped down description of highlighting. Remember, you have to start out small and build your way up to bigger things. This

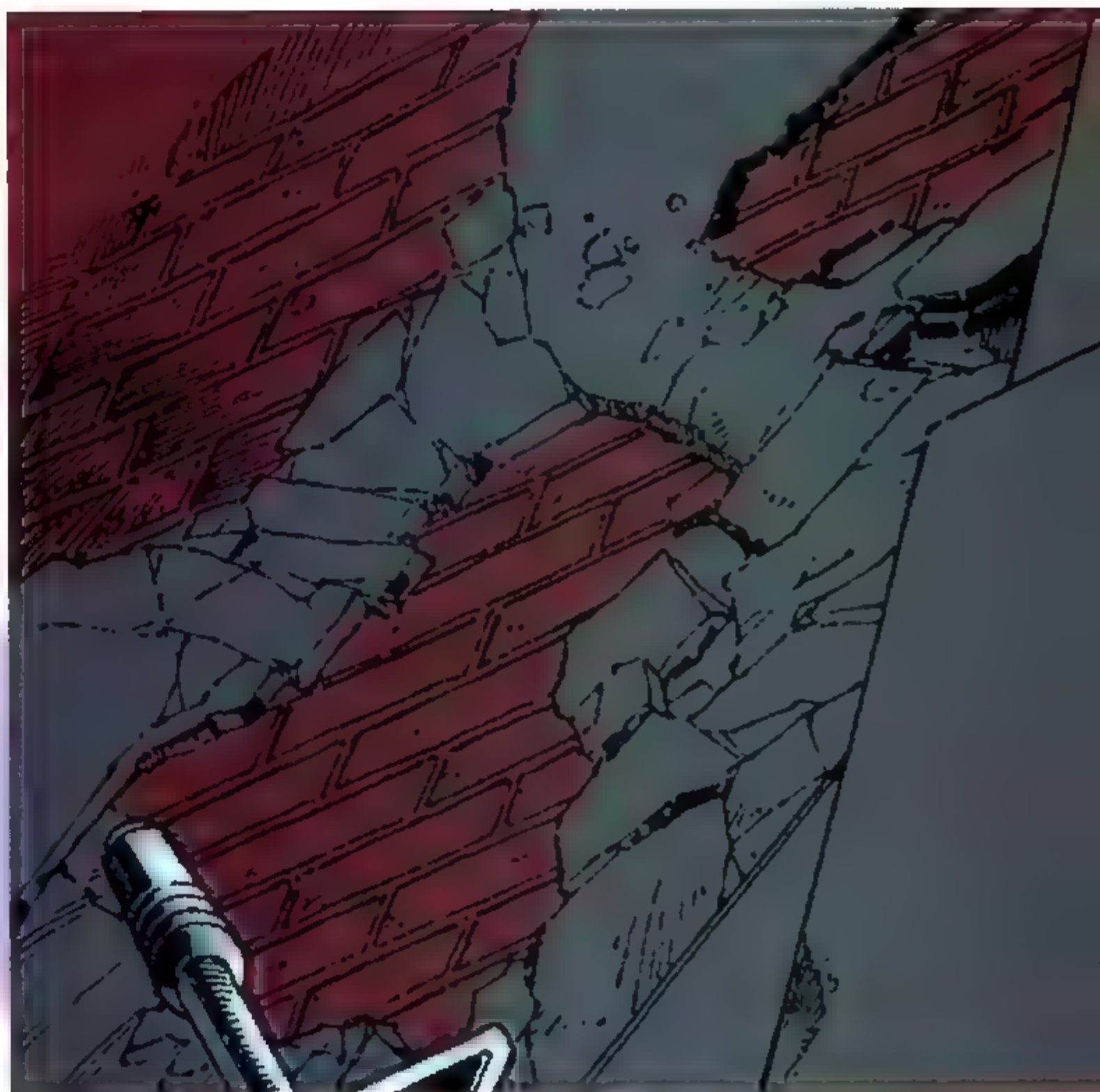


FIG. 2

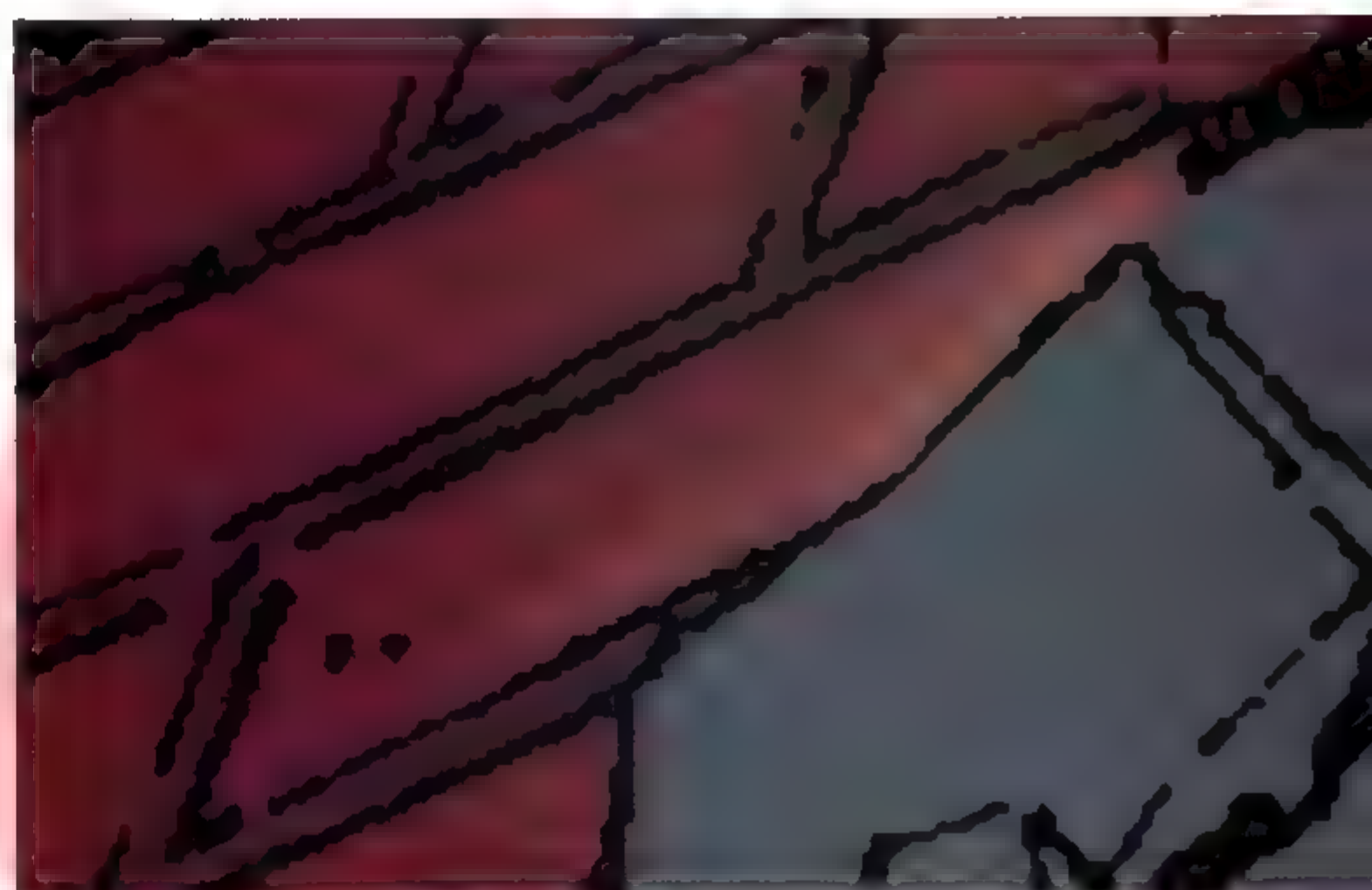


FIG. 3



## DIGITAL COLORING

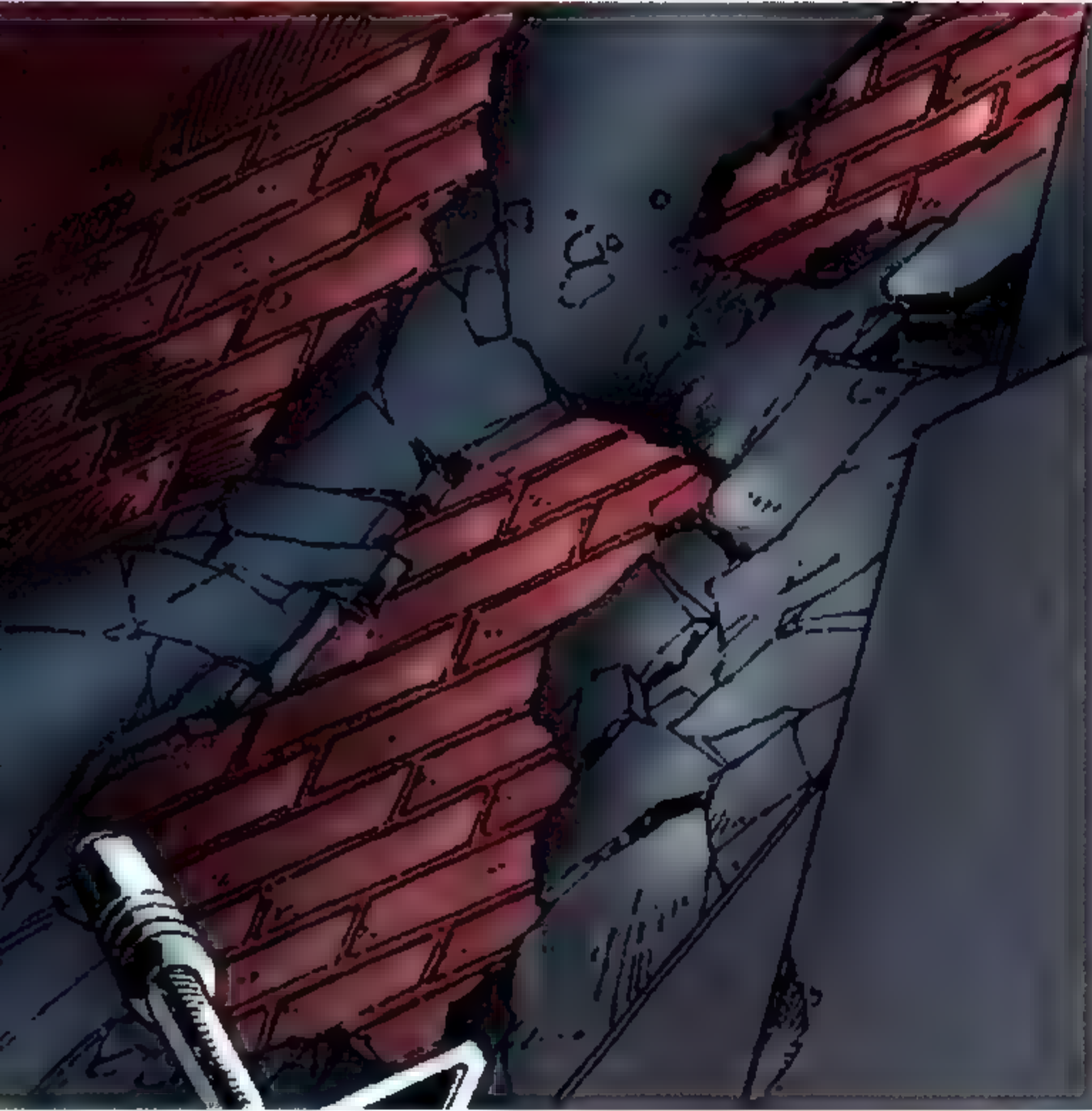


FIG. 4

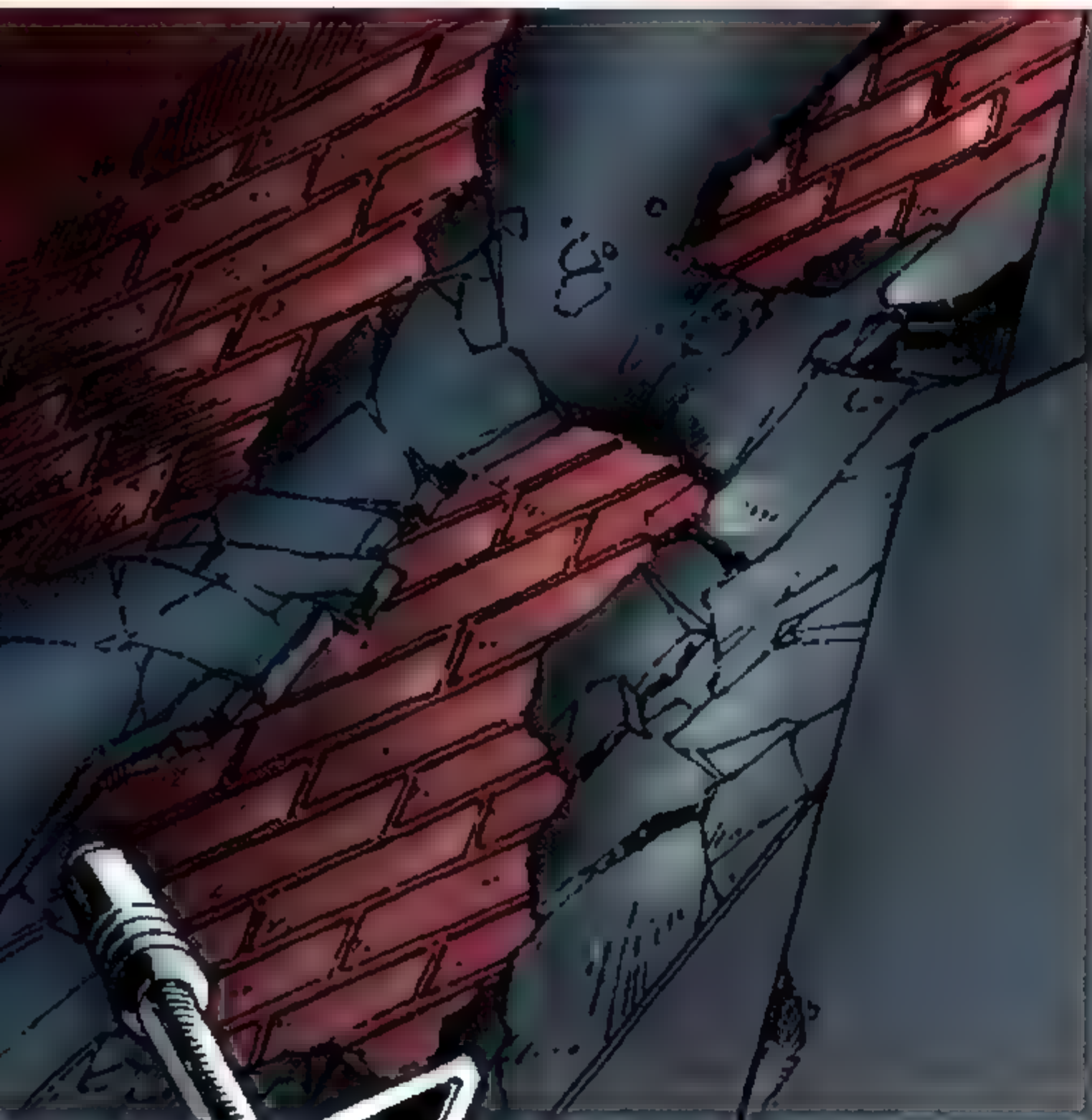


FIG. 5

highlighting technique can be applied to almost anything from skin to hair or even metal. You have to make sure your highlight does not look out of place. By using a combination of feathering and hard lines, the effect can be pulled off. See Fig.6.

### ***Color Line Art***

What is Color Line Art?

Color line art is the effect of converting black line art to a specific color or screen.

Why would you ever want to use color line art?

Some of the best reasons or places to do this are explosions, fire, energy blast, smoke, sound effects, distant background images, and hair (See Fig.7). It can really make the action happening inside a panel jump out at you. This can be done the right way or the wrong way. Wrong ways would be using color schemes that do not match or look unnatural, and using the effect too much on one page. The right way would be using colors that are subtle but effective.

1. If you are using the layer technique to color your image you should have the Line Art Layer selected (see Sketch #1&2). Zoom in on the area that you want to convert and lasso the entire area, including the open areas in between the black line art.
2. Now, using the magic wand and holding down the alt key (or option key for Mac users), click in the open areas around the black line art. What you are doing here is deselecting the areas we do not want to be affected and leaving only the line art that we want to color.
3. Now fill the selected line art with your color of choice.

As with any Photoshop effect this is something that needs to be played around with. Look at what other people are doing and see what is and is not working.



### **The Swatch Palette**

Setting up a swatch palette can help you save time and keep your coloring on a project consistent. If you are doing work for a monthly book you will want to be able to use the same color for the lead character's hair in every panel, or anything else that will appear repeatedly.

1. First you will want to make sure the Swatch Palette is open. It is usually on the right hand side of the screen among the other floating palettes. If it is not there, select the Window drop down menu and click on Show Swatches.
2. With the color you want to save selected move the mouse over top of the Swatches Palette. Notice when you move it over an empty area the cursor turns into a paintbucket. When this happens is when you click to save the color as a swatch.
3. If you put a swatch in there by mistake that you want to remove, simply hold down the Control (Ctrl) key and click on the color to cut it out.
4. If you are going to be doing your work on a different computer or you need to send the color palette settings to another colorist, you can actually save the palette. Click on the arrow in the right hand corner of the palette and select Save Swatches. It will ask you where you want to save them and request a name. It will be saved with an ACO. Extension.

**Quick Tip:** If you work on multiple projects, use two or three white swatches to separate the different sets of swatches you use in one palette. That way you do not always have to keep opening a new palette every time you switch projects. Most likely you will be able to use some of the colors you have created on other projects.

It appears I'm running out of room, so I'm signing off for now.

Christopher Riley

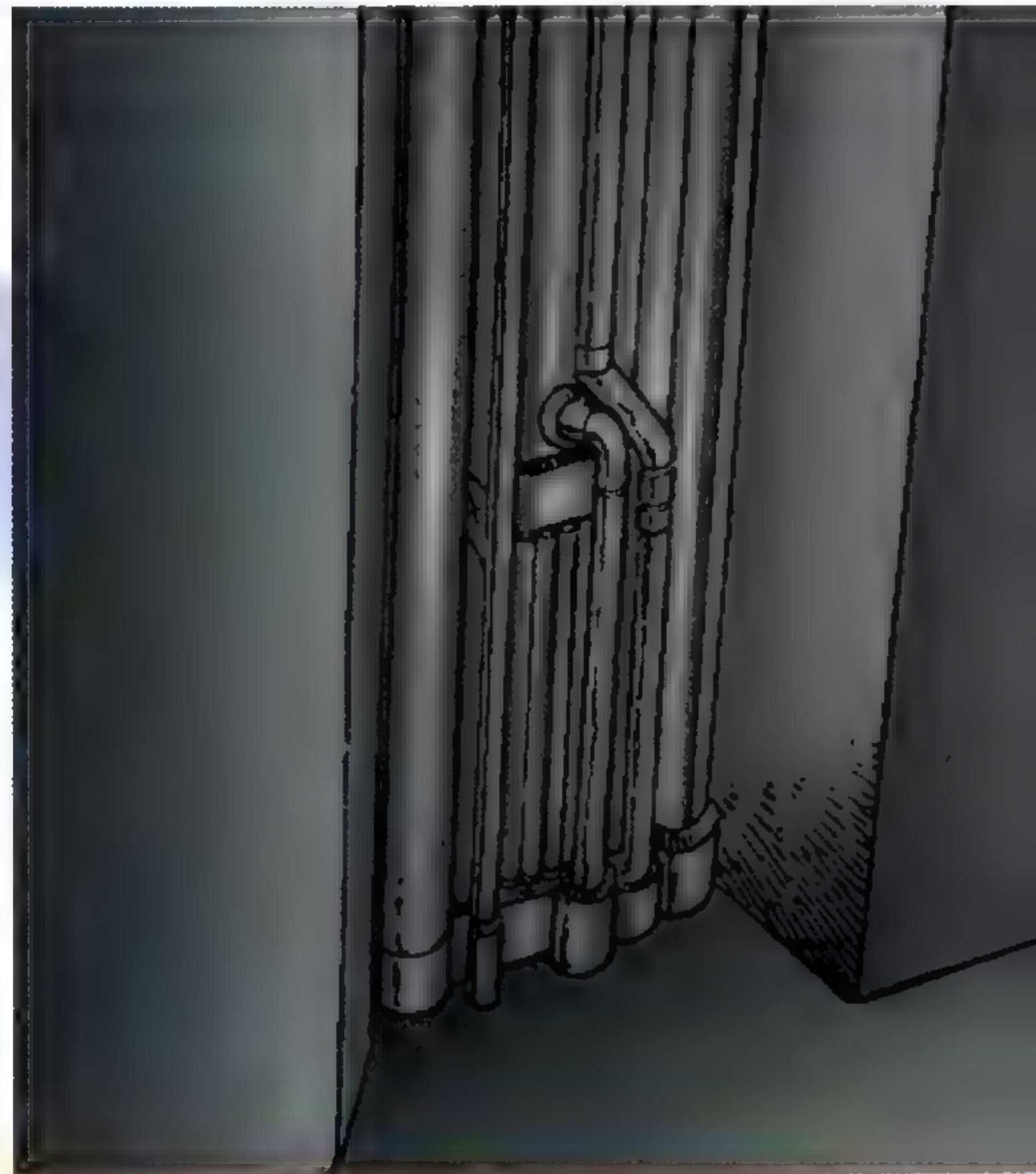


FIG. 6



FIG. 7



## WHO?



Along with his duties with Sketch Magazine, **Bob Hickey** has been the creative force behind Blood & Roses, StormQuest and Tempered Steele. He oversees production work at Sacred Studios which is currently packaging Parts Unknown for Image Comics and has a new Blood and Roses series in the works. Bob is one of the co-founders of Blue Line Productions. [www.sacredstudios.com](http://www.sacredstudios.com)



**Beau Smith** created and writes Parts Unknown currently at Image Comics, writer of The Undertaker for Chaos Comics, The Tenth, Wynonna Earp, Spawn: Book Of Souls, Wolverine/Shi, Batman/Wildcat and the upcoming cross over-Xena/Wonder Woman.



**Chris Riley** has done everything from lettering and paste-up to full comic book production. In his time he has helped to publish over 40 comic books for various publishers and self-published two of his own books. He has been doing computer coloring for over seven years. Some of his current projects include a Parts Unknown mini-series for Image Comics, Sketch Magazine, various CD labels for bands and DJ's, and self publishing his comic book Brainwalker.



**Paul Sizer** teaches graphic design at Western Michigan University, runs his own freelance design and illustration business, and in his spare time writes, illustrates and designs his comic book LITTLE WHITE MOUSE, published by Caliber Comics. Paul lives and works in Kalamazoo, Michigan. See more of Paul's work at: [www.littlewhitemouse.com](http://www.littlewhitemouse.com).

**Tom Bierbaum** with wife Mary has scripted such comics as Legion of Super-Heroes and The Heckler for DC Comics, Xena and Return to Jurassic Park for Topps Comics, Star for Image Comics and Dead Kid Adventures a creator owned project by Knight Press.



**Joe Corroney** is the instructor for Comic Book-Cartoon Illustration class at the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio. He has worked on various comic books for a variety of publishers including Dead-Kid and Blood and Roses for Knight Press, Green Lantern for DC Comics, and his creator-owned title for World Famous Comics, Death Avenger which will premiere later this year. His freelance art career includes working as an illustrator for White Wolf Games and official licensees such as Lucasfilm, Sony, and Paramount Pictures creating artwork for Star Wars, Men In Black, and Star Trek books and magazines. He is currently creating artwork for the new Image series, Parts Unknown, and penciling a new Blood and Roses story. You can see more of Joe's artwork and visit his official website through the World Famous Comics website, [www.wfcomics.com](http://www.wfcomics.com), when it debuts later this year.

You can view his online portfolio now at <http://www.adobe.com/eportfolio/joeCorroney>. You can also view online galleries of his published and unpublished Star Wars art at the following websites: [www.theforce.net/cgi-bin/museum/imageFolio.cgi](http://www.theforce.net/cgi-bin/museum/imageFolio.cgi), [www.echostation.com/interview/corroney.htm](http://www.echostation.com/interview/corroney.htm), [downtime.echostation.com/fanart/jccorroney.html](http://downtime.echostation.com/fanart/jccorroney.html), [www.rebelpilots.com/](http://www.rebelpilots.com/)



**Dan Davis** was born in Celina, Ohio on Sept. 18, 1957. A very short time later he was hooked on comics, both strips and books and decided to make it his career. After a brief stint apprenticing for New York comic book artist Dan Adkins, he returned to Ohio to finish college and find a "real" job. But he kept sending samples to the large comic companies and freelancing on the side to the small ones. Finally in 1990 DC comics liked his inks enough to send him a Flash Annual and soon he was in the comics business full time. Since then he has worked on many popular characters such as Superman, Superboy, Animaniacs, Flintstones/Jetsons, Scooby-Doo, Garfield, and Alley Oop. And recently he's added writing and penciling credits to his established inking credentials. Currently he is busy inking the Star Spangled Kid comic book, Stars and S.T.R.I.P.E. at DC, and continues to freelance on various comics projects. He lives in Celina, Ohio with his wife Lisa, and kids Alex and Hannah.

**Flint Henry** has illustrated for all the major comic companies. From as far back as SCOUT and GRIMJACK for Eclipse Comics to more recent BATMAN: BULLOCK'S LAW for DC and covers for PARTS UNKNOWN for Image Comics.

## COMIC BOOK ART TIPS &amp; TECHNIQUES

# SKETCH

VOL. 1 - NUMBER 3

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Sketch Comic Book Art Tips & Techniques Magazine is published bi-monthly (six times a year) by Blue Line Productions, 8385 U.S. Highway 42, Florence KY 41042, USA. Periodicals postage paid in Florence, KY and at additional mailing offices. Specialty Shop distribution handled by Diamond Comics Distributors, FM International. Basic subscription rates: one year (six issues) \$35.70 U.S., \$49.00 Canada & Mexico, \$68.00 Foreign. Prepaid in U.S. funds only. POSTMASTER send changes of address to Sketch Magazine 8385 U.S. Highway 42, Florence, KY 41042. Entire contents copyright 2000 Blue Line Productions. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited. PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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Comic books are a fun media and one of the few that anyone could create their own visions to share with others.

Blue Line Productions goals are aimed toward the enhancement of art through knowledge and quality art supplies.

No matter what it takes we make sure that the reader has the information that they are wanting.

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## A Note...

Welcome to the third issue of Sketch Magazine. This magazine is an ongoing experiment. Our goal is to bring you insight into the world of comic art and storytelling. To do this we'll continue to change and modify our content to meet your needs. We welcome any and all suggestions. If there's something you'd like to see or a creator you'd like covered please let us know. We'll make every effort to find a way to include it.

Flint Henry comes on board as senior editor with this issue. Flint brings a fountain of information and knowledge of the comic book industry to Sketch. Flint's been a penciler, inker and cover artist for all of the major comic companies. His history stretches from SCOUT and GRIMJACK to the more recent BATMAN: BULLOCK'S LAW for DC. He'll bring his expertise, humor and common sense to SKETCH and we're glad to have him.

Last issue I asked a question about the survival of the comic book market. The internet is standing out as a possible future for this medium that we love so much.

Over the last month, best selling author Stephen King announced that he will be releasing a story for sale on his website one chapter at a time for a small fee to fans. AOL, the largest supplier of internet service, is merging with Time Warner, this gives AOL a huge catalog of material to sell on the net. They will begin developing a way to sell content on the web without losing millions of copies to piracy. Microsoft is currently developing a hand held book that looks comfortable and easy to carry and can download many books and hold them in memory. As these companies bypass the traditional route of printing and paper they'll be able to offer comics at more affordable prices and a higher profit margin.

Can  
digital  
files be  
the spin  
racks of  
the future?

Can digital files be the spin racks of the future?

The internet opens a huge market for creators and publishers. Can we sell on the net and continue to make a living doing it? A few things will have to happen to make digital files work for comic books. An encryption software needs to be created that creators and publishers can use to keep piracy down. The software will have to work without interfering with the customers' enjoyment of the material.

Free trade is the current problem of the net. To make a living as a comic book creators we must be paid for the work we do. This is easy when the book is printed and delivered to stores and sold as a physical property. But the net is much harder to control. As a child I traded my Batman comics for Avengers comics and Superman for Ironman comics. When I traded that copy, I no longer owned a copy of that comic. The net doesn't work that way. You can send a copy to a friend and keep a copy for yourself. The copy you send is piracy and the creator hasn't received any revenue for that copy.

Can comic books be the medium that benefits the most from the internet?

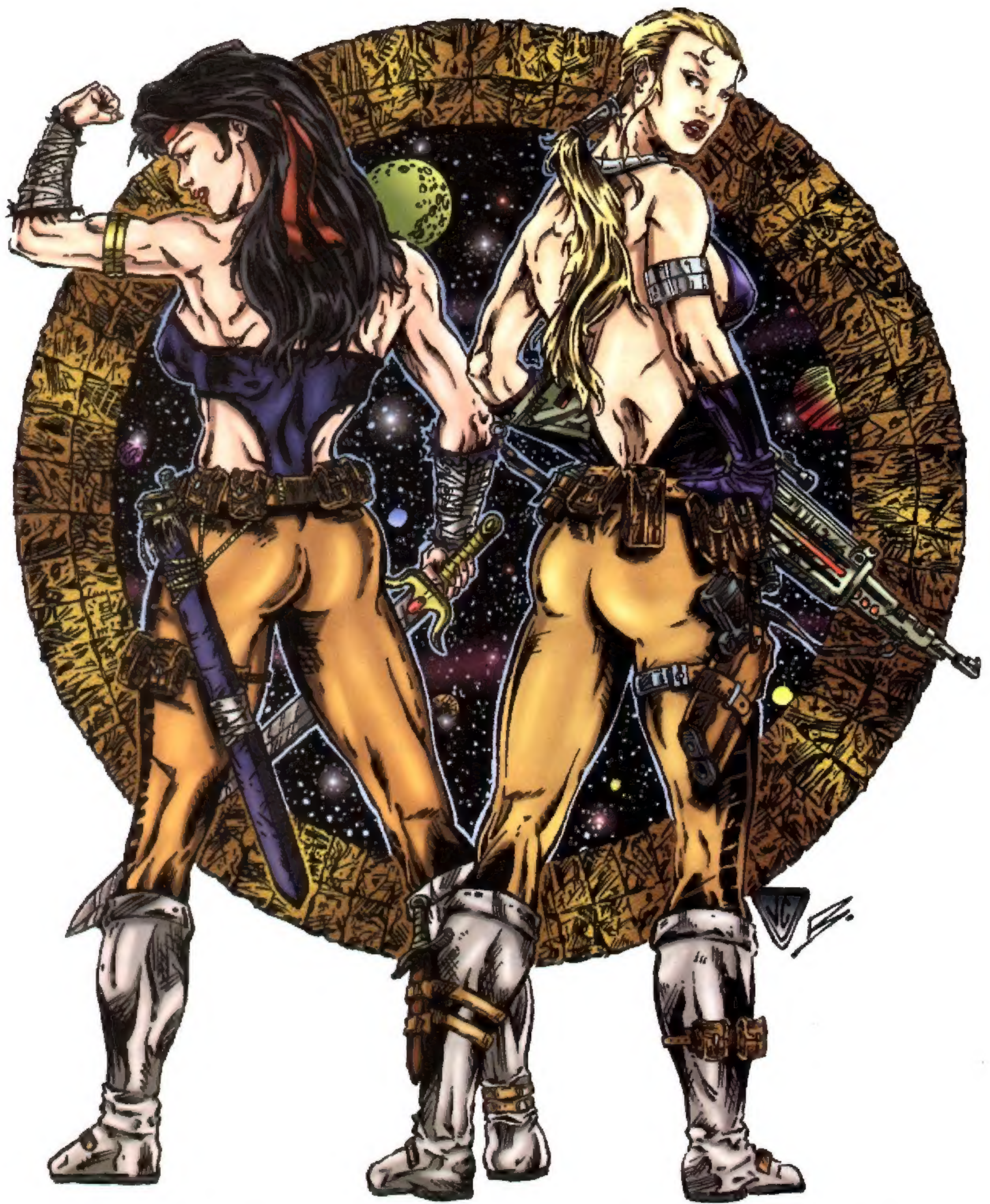
That's up to us. I'm interested in hearing what you think of this development. If you have any information or insights to share. Please do so.

I'd also like to thank Marc Slyvestri, Frank Mastromauro and all the gang at Top Cow for their contributions and sharing their precious time with us.



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